BAILEYS
ORIGINAL IRISH CREAM

·EFFORTLESS· ENTERTAINING

— *Bernice Hurst* —

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EFFORTLESS ENTERTAINING

Bernice Hurst

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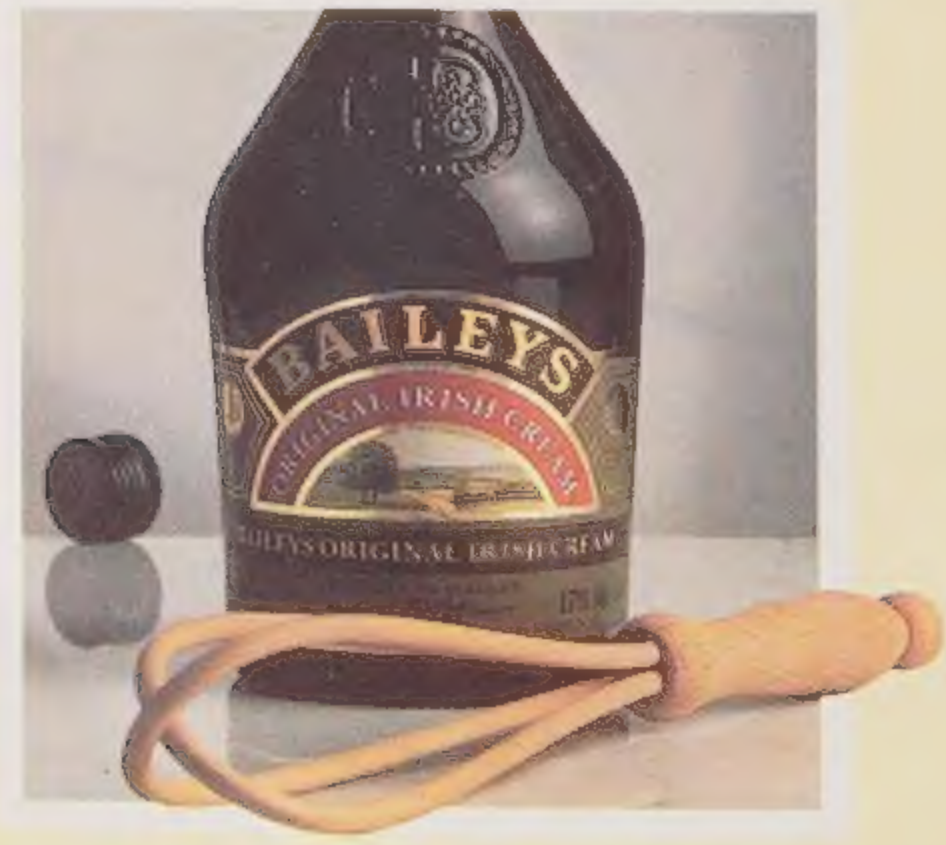

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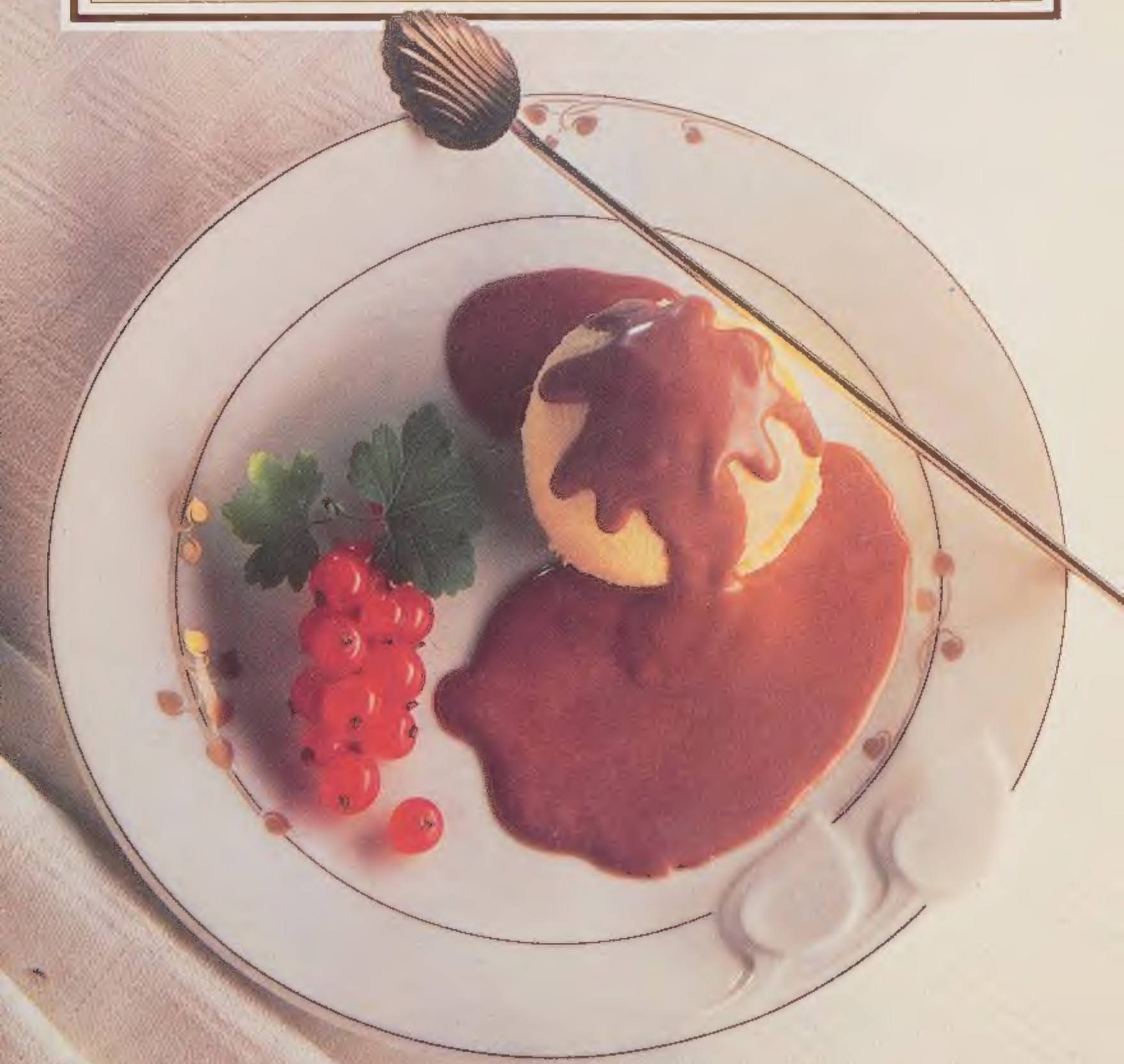

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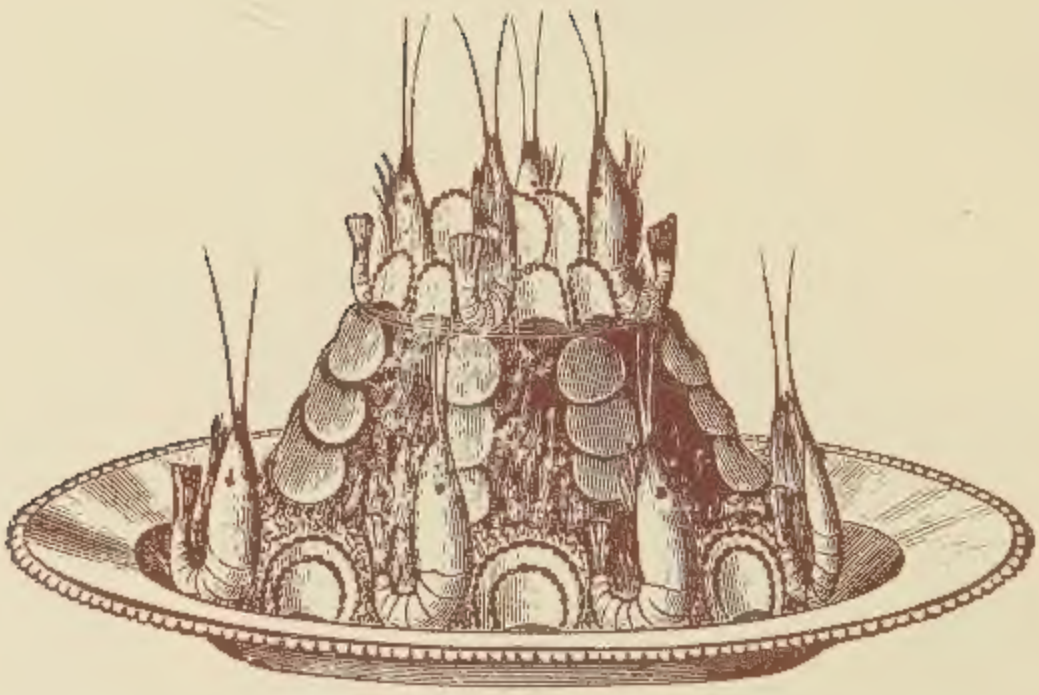

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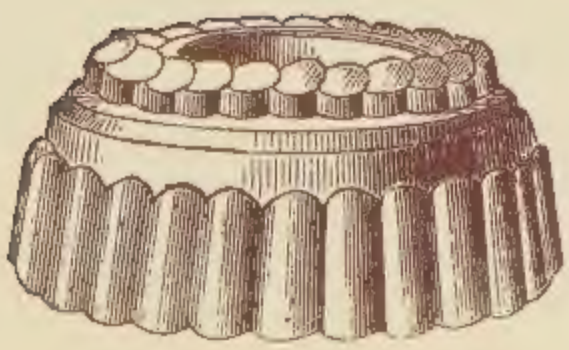


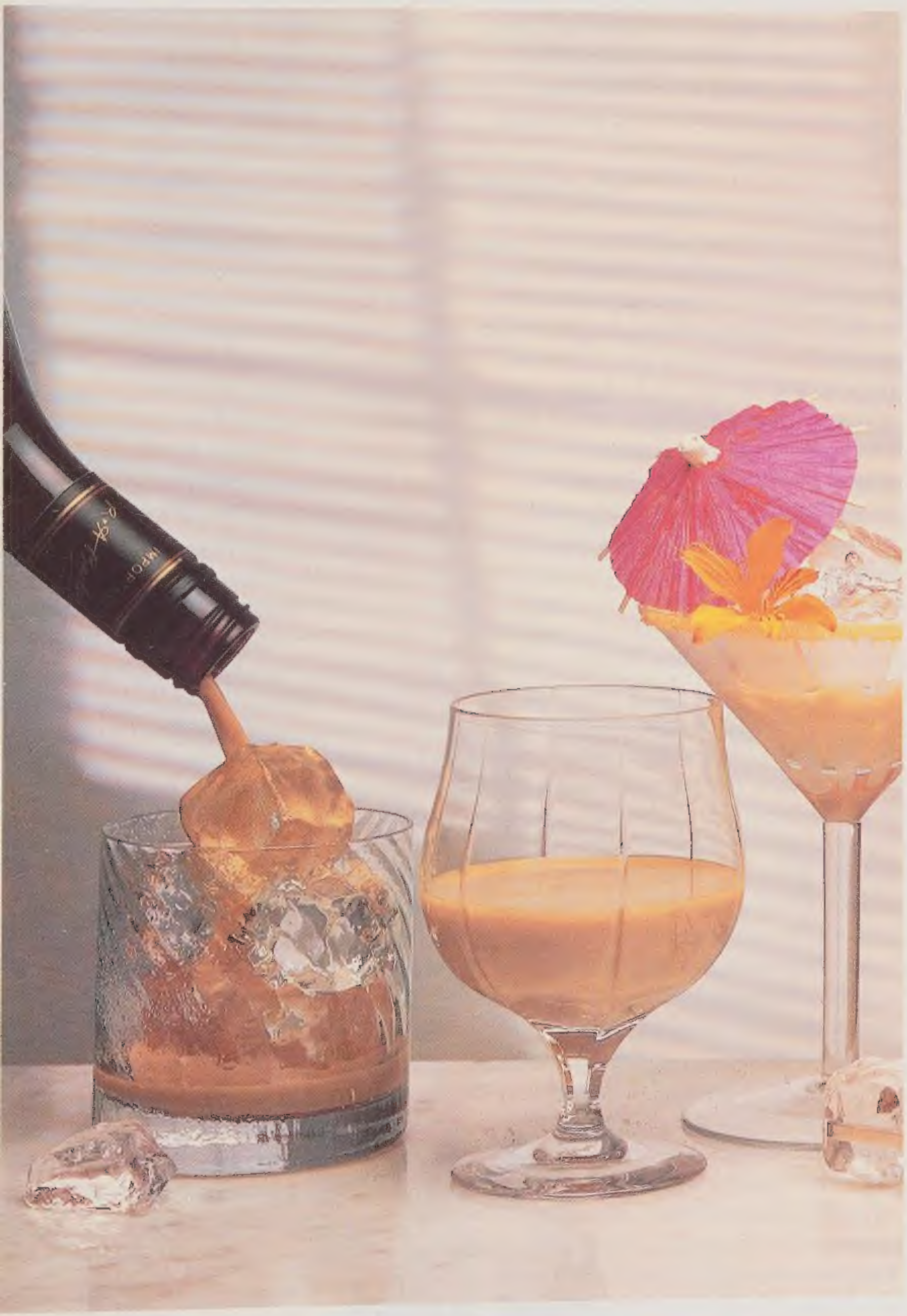
—Introduction—

Effortless entertaining is something anyone planning a party, whether it be an informal get-together with a few friends for supper, a formal dinner for business colleagues, a celebration or a grand buffet hopes to achieve. No matter how much work has gone in behind the scenes we all want to give the impression of skill, style and elegance whatever the occasion. If the preliminaries can also be simplified by preparing in advance and choosing a menu that is perfectly suited for the event, everyone can relax and have a good time, including the host and hostess.

If your entertaining is going to be truly effortless, it is essential to prepare a checklist and work your way through it to ensure that all goes well on the day. A smooth operation relies on advance planning and parties are no different. If you want to enjoy the event as much as the lead-up to it, that lead-up is vital. The host and hostess should always feel as relaxed as they look and can best achieve that aim by devising a schedule and following it until every last detail has been ticked off.

The intention of *Effortless Entertaining* is to attain that end every time. By beginning with a chapter on party planning, a timetable for the event can be worked out as well as guidelines for table settings, china, glassware and cutlery, shopping lists and invitations. Choosing a menu, estimating quantities, planning contrasting or complementary dishes, and checking the availability of seasonal ingredients will all be discussed. Making plans based on the time of year or fresh products readily obtainable will come into this chapter as well as hints on how to find and use the unusual or exotic. In addition, decorations, seating plans and special touches will be suggested. *Effortless Entertaining* is more than a cookery book. It is a guide to planning and enjoying events of every kind. All the details that need attention will be itemised to make the lead-up to your party as smooth as possible.

There are countless reasons for choosing to entertain. There are times when we want a quiet evening with friends, times when we want to kick up our heels and just laugh and feel jolly. There are more formal occasions when we must entertain for business reasons. Parties can be intimate or crowded, quiet or lively. Guests can mill around, mingling with different groups and shifting frequently during the course of the evening, or can remain seated as at a dinner party. A surprise party is always fun, barbecues an opportunity



for group participation, a picnic the ideal way to relax on a summer's day. All of these events are different to each other and it is necessary to consider the nature of the gathering before settling on a menu.

Each chapter of *Effortless Entertaining* is divided into menus for different occasions. There is a full-colour photograph of each menu so that you can see what the end result looks like, a few paragraphs about the menu composition or the occasion, step-by-step recipes and a fully detailed timetable for preparing the meal plus recommendations on which wines to serve. Instructions on preparation and presentation are included to ensure that nothing is overlooked. In many cases there are also drawings and tips on the little extras that put the finishing touch to a memorable occasion. From the day you decide to send out invitations until the minute the last course is served, each stage is fully specified.

The menus chosen represent a wide range of occasions and a wide range of meals from late night snacks following a party or an evening at the theatre to sit-down dinners, informal early evening buffets and, for the more ambitious, two choices for a wedding breakfast. The number of guests catered for varies from four to fifty. Dishes are hot and cold, ranging from snacks or hors d'oeuvres to banquets. There is a chapter on outdoor entertaining which includes barbecues and picnics.

Finally, there are two essential chapters for effortless entertaining. The first, Safety Precautions, offers advice on things that should always be kept on hand, whether it be in the store cupboard or the freezer. Despite hearty recommendations to use fresh ingredients whenever possible, there will always be that unexpected party that has to be created in the minimum amount of time from whatever is instantly on hand. A well-stocked larder or freezer guarantees success on short notice every time. The second, Basic Recipes, covers sauces, salad dressings, flavoured butters, marinades, bread and pastry. Once you have mastered these basics, there is no end to the ways in which you can improvise to make each dish your own special creation. We could not, and did not, include instructions for methods and dishes which you will find in your other, favourite, cookery books but concentrated only on those that will increase your repertoire through their suitability for variation.

One last point to bear in mind when reading this book is that entertaining is a purely personal matter. You know your guests and you know your abilities. We have tried to make suggestions that are both practical and interesting, spurring you to try new dishes or to assemble menus with flair. But as with all cooking, there are few hard and fast rules. To make your party individual you must let your own personality have free rein. We hope that you will not only enjoy our recommendations but will use them as a setting off point to developing your own skills as the host(ess) with the most(est)!

— Kitchen Aids —

Although the only essential tools a good cook needs are a set of sharp knives and a decent set of pans, there are dozens of appliances and aids available today that offer invaluable assistance. If you have them, use them! Don't rush out to buy things that may not be of regular use, but try to accumulate a few of these labour saving devices if you can.

A food processor reduces slicing, grating and chopping times to seconds. It can liquidise or purée, mix batters and pastry. Few food processors are entirely successful with cream and egg whites, however, and many have a limited capacity when you are preparing large quantities.

An electric food mixer—for beating, making pastry or bread dough, whisking cream and egg whites. It can deal with larger quantities than many food processors can handle and frequently has extra attachments that do all (and sometimes more) than a food processor. If the body is detachable so that you also have an electric hand mixer to use in pans, all the better.

Microwave ovens—there are dozens of books available with recipes for both basic and extravagant dishes that can be cooked in a microwave. But it is also incredibly helpful in preparing the various stages of a recipe. Chocolate and butter can be melted, sauces cooked and vegetables softened. They are ideal for reheating and defrosting. If you have a microwave oven, be sure that you make it work for you.

Ice cream makers—generally an extravagance, but they do produce superb results. Think carefully before buying and consider such questions as size, capacity, noise level, speed and power source (that is, does it go into the freezer or does it have its own motor for freezing?).

Hot trays—these can be electric or candle-lit and come in varying sizes right up to hostess trolleys that can keep an entire meal warm for hours. Prices obviously vary as well, so decide how often you are likely to use it before making your purchase.

Where to Begin

You have decided to have a party. You may have a specific reason or you may just feel the urge to invite some people in for drinks and conversation. What do you do about it? The first step is to sit down comfortably with a notepad and pencil and draw up a plan of action. Ask yourself a few basic questions:

- When should I have the party?
- How much time have I got to prepare for it?
- How many people do I want to invite?
- What time of day will it be?
- What time of year will it be?
- Should it be indoors or outdoors?
- Do I want a large group or a small one?
- Do I want to serve a meal or a snack?
- Will my guests eat and drink a lot, or nurse their drinks fuelled by the occasional nibble?
- How much food and drink should I allow for each person?
- Is there a particular occasion to celebrate?
- Shall I have a theme?
- Can I do it all by myself or do I need help?
- Will I have to borrow or hire tables, chairs, glasses, dishes?
- Can I do the serving or do I need someone else for that?
- Can my kitchen cope?
- Have I got enough space at home or do I need to hire a hall or marquee?
- Should we have live music or records?
- How much can I afford to spend?

Obviously the answers to these questions are going to lead naturally onto the next phase of the operation. The parameters of the party will largely be determined by the type of occasion and the number of people you decide to invite. This will help you begin planning a menu. And now is the time for some research. We all know that ingredients are available either seasonally or at a premium if they are out of season. So a tour of the local shops is in order to find out what is around. It is also time to look for those new, unusual or exotic tidbits that can lift a mundane dish into the realms of haute cuisine. Although you may have a rough idea what you want before you set out, it is best to keep an open mind. A vital ingredient may be difficult to find. Or something that hadn't occurred to you may turn out to be just

what you need. Have a talk with the shopkeepers. They can generally offer advice on using things you aren't familiar with. Given some notice, special requests can be met, ingredients ordered, meat and fish trimmed the way you want them to be.

Then it's back to the drawing board. Get some books from the library if you are searching for inspiration and decide how best to use those goodies you saw on your shopping trip. The dishes needn't, indeed shouldn't, all be complicated or difficult. It is far too easy to overdo things and find that you are hitting the panic button because you have taken on more than you can handle. Remember the aims of the party—to entertain your guests and see that they have a good time, but also for you to have a good time before and after the fact. As you are intending to give pleasure, so you should intend to derive some for yourself both in your accomplishments and the actual socialising on the day. The means should be as enjoyable as the ends.

Now for the next step. You know when, why, where and who you are planning to entertain. You know what you want to cook and what you need to buy, but how do you decide how much? Again, the nature of the occasion will give you some clues. If the party is a pre- or post-dinner buffet, you can allow for a dozen or so bite-sized canapés per person. When food is served late in the evening, remember that your guests have almost certainly eaten once already and will not be ravenously hungry. Portions will tend to be small. If the party is going on all evening, you should plan on serving enough food to make a meal. Choose a combination of main course, salad or vegetable and starch, that is rice, pasta, potatoes or bread. Follow with one or two desserts. Dinner party portions need to be larger than buffet portions as the meal is leisurely and the main part of the evening. With a buffet, the chat and drinks before and after the meal tend to be more important thus guests will eat less than they might when sitting still.

Drinks should also be planned in advance. Be sure to have soft drinks available for those who prefer them. Make plenty of ice and store it in bags in the freezer. Mix punches, hot or cold, ahead of time but only add ice, soda or sparkling water at the last minute. Be sure you have several jugs or a bowl large enough to serve from.

Next, think about what your guests will eat and drink from, what you will cook in and serve from, how you will set the table. Disposable dishes and cups are now far sturdier and more attractive than they were a few years ago. If you do not have enough cutlery and crockery of your own, consider the alternatives of hiring extra or using disposables. The same applies to tablecloths and napkins. Glasses can always be borrowed from the off-license where you buy your drinks, but do think about what sizes and shapes would be most suitable.

Refreshments are not the only thing to consider when planning a party. How do you want the room to look? What flowers are likely to be fresh? Are fancy decorations in order? Should the table be simple or elaborate? First impressions are very important and the atmosphere you create in the room ought to set the ball rolling. Decide

whether to have things bright and cheerful or dark and subdued. Spend some time on decorations. Even if you don't have a particular theme, paper flowers or streamers, fresh flowers and candles subtly tell your guests what sort of evening is in store for them. Decide whether the music is incidental in the background or whether you want it to dominate, at least in the early part of the evening to break the ice. Should it be soft and romantic, lively enough for dancing (given the space), nostalgic, or raucous enough for singing along? Themes can be fun and stimulating. You can go to the extent of requesting fancy dress but even without this, an illusion can be created that really gets things going. Try having a harlequin ball, a Halloween party, Christmas in July or any zany idea that occurs to you. Or choose a country—have an Italian, French, Indian, Chinese, All-American party for example. Use national colours for linen, get posters from tourist boards, make small decorations for the table based on local customs.

Space and seating often need serious thought as well. When planning a large party, you must decide whether home is in fact most suitable or whether you should think of hiring a larger venue. Local halls are often inexpensive. There may be somewhere unusual such as a barn that can be borrowed and dressed up. Marquees come in all shapes and sizes to suit a wide variety of requirements. Bookings are often made quite far in advance, however, and you should look into this as early as you can. Similarly, if you want live music, be sure to listen to the group play and make your arrangements as far in advance as possible.

If you have enough room, several small tables can be friendlier than one large one. In this case, remember that you will need salt and pepper shakers, mustard pots, sugar bowls and creamers for each table, easy things to forget. For formal occasions, a seating plan may be necessary although it is frequently simpler to allow guests to choose their own seats and companions. When planning a buffet, remember that some people will be standing up holding or carrying plates while others are sitting wherever they can, be it on furniture or the floor. Think about serving. Should you set the food out for guests to help themselves, circulate among them with trays or station yourself (or helpers) at the buffet table to serve everyone? It is also wise to have contingency plans when arranging to entertain outdoors. Be prepared for that sudden cold wind or unexpected shower.

Once you have made your decisions, the organisation is straightforward. Itemise every single job you need to do from inviting your guests to bidding them goodnight, no matter how trivial it may seem. That way each step can be completed in its correct sequence and ticked off satisfactorily. Most important of all, remember to have everything, bar any essential last minute cooking, under control at least an hour before the party begins. That last hour must be yours and yours alone. There must be time for a deep breath, a bath or just a few minutes to put your feet up knowing that you have done everything you can to make your entertaining seem truly effortless.

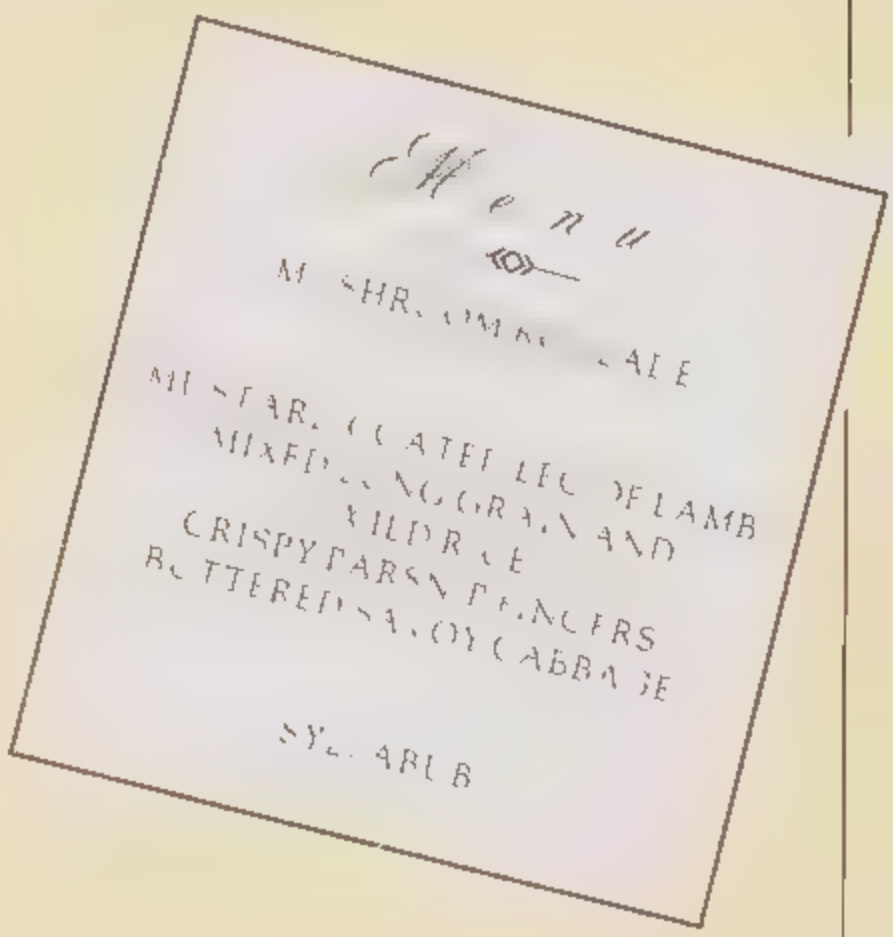
Dinner Parties

Dinner for Eight

There are two, perhaps conflicting, aims to remember when entertaining. As far as the guests are concerned, the food should be attractive and delicious, giving the best possible impression of your skills in the kitchen. But as far as the host and hostess are concerned, the preparation should be easy to organise with the maximum amount of time left to enjoy the evening. Last minute cooking should be kept to the minimum but where it is necessary, should be as simple as possible. The menu needs to be carefully planned to achieve a balance of complicated or elaborate dishes and straightforward ones. In this way you will be able to successfully achieve both aims.

The menu illustrated here combines all these criteria. The mushroom roulade is perhaps the most difficult dish to prepare in that it should be assembled and served with as little delay as possible. The mushrooms can be cooked in advance, however, as can the roulade mixture up to the stage of incorporating the egg whites. Alternatively, it can be assembled and reheated as described in the recipe, but still should not be left sitting for too long.

On the other hand, syllabub is prepared in advance and left in a cool place until you need it. The lamb is marinated early on the day, or even



the night before your dinner party and then roasted along with the parsnips. Long grain and wild rice come mixed and ready to cook from the supermarket courtesy of Uncle Ben. If you cannot find it, use white rice and garnish with freshly chopped parsley just before serving. The cabbage should be steamed or boiled as usual and tossed with a knob of butter at the last minute. Serve the lamb surrounded by crispy brown parsnips and carve at the table. Pass bowls of rice and cabbage separately so that each guest can help himself. Later, glasses of syllabub sitting on small dishes can be served with a biscuit or two for each person. Thus your own evening will be relaxed, with your only chore the finishing touches to the roulade and the serving itself.

MUSHROOM ROULADE

Filling
6 oz/175 g mushrooms, sliced
10 fl oz/300 ml chicken stock
2 tbsp/30 ml butter
2 tbsp/30 ml flour
5 fl oz/150 ml single cream
2 tbsp/30 ml Cinzano Bianco
Roulade
2 tbsp/30 ml butter
2 tbsp/30 ml flour
5 fl oz/150 ml milk
4 eggs, separated
5 tbsp/75 ml Parmesan cheese
salt and pepper

Poach the mushrooms in stock for 10 minutes. Save the stock for the sauce, but drain the mushrooms and set them aside. Prepare a white sauce as on page 150 using the butter, flour, cream and 4 oz/125 ml chicken stock. Flavour with Cinzano and stir in the mushrooms.

To make the roulade, prepare a thick white sauce with the butter, flour and milk. Add the egg yolks one at a time, stirring well after each. Flavour with Parmesan cheese, salt and pepper to taste. Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Gently fold two spoonsful into the sauce to loosen it slightly. Carefully add the remaining egg whites.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Grease a Swiss roll tin 10 × 15 inches (25 × 37 cm) and line with buttered greaseproof paper. Pour the roulade mixture onto the paper and very carefully tilt it so that the entire pan is covered. Bake for 7–8 minutes or until firm to the touch.

Sprinkle a clean sheet of greaseproof paper with Parmesan cheese and tip the baked roulade onto it. Remove the original sheet of paper and spread the mushroom mixture over the centre of the roulade. Save a little bit of sauce for pouring over the top. Using the greaseproof paper to help, fold the roulade lengthways and transfer to an ovenproof serving dish. Pour the remaining sauce on top.

The roulade can be prepared in advance and reheated for 5 minutes in the oven or 2 minutes in the microwave, covering with tin foil if using the oven or pierced clingfilm if using the microwave. Countless other fillings can be substituted—try cheese and spinach, leeks and hardboiled eggs, tomatoes and seafood or anything else that springs to mind.

Mustard Coated Leg of Lamb

1 leg of lamb
6 tbsp/90 ml French mustard
1 tsp/5 ml rosemary
2 tbsp/30 ml soy sauce
1 clove garlic, crushed
pinch ground ginger
2 tbsp/30 ml olive oil

Combine all the sauce ingredients except the oil. Whisk until smooth then add the oil a few drops at a time and continue whisking until it has all been used. Coat the lamb and, if possible, leave to marinate overnight or for several hours at least. This is not essential if you are pushed for time but does help to tenderise the meat and improve the flavour. If you ask the butcher in advance he will bone the lamb for you, making it easier to carve and serve.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Place the lamb on a rack over a roasting pan and cook for 25 minutes per pound.

Crispy Parsnip Fingers

6 parsnips, peeled

4 tbsp/60 ml vegetable oil

Cut the top, narrow part of the parsnip into quarters, lengthways. Cut the wider part in half lengthways, then slice and cut the slices into thin fingers.

Heat the oil or fat in an ovenproof dish. Add the parsnips and turn to coat. Roast for 1 hour at 180C/350F/Gas 4, turning occasionally to ensure that they brown evenly.

SYLLABUB

3 tsp/15 ml finely grated lemon rind

3 tbsp/45 ml lemon juice, strained

6 fl oz/175 ml dry white wine

3 tbsp/45 ml brandy

3 oz/75 g caster sugar

15 fl oz/450 ml double cream

Combine all the ingredients, except the cream, and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Leave overnight. Add the cream and whisk until the syllabub holds its shape and soft peaks form when you remove the whisk. You can do this with an electric mixer but must take great care not to overbeat it. Spoon into small wine glasses and decorate with a strip of lemon rind or a tiny mint leaf. The syllabub can be prepared up to 48 hours before your dinner party but should be stored in a cool place. If you keep the syllabub in the refrigerator, remove it 30 minutes before you are ready to serve.

Timetable

1 Prepare the syllabub and leave in a cool place. If you keep it in the refrigerator, remove it when you are ready to serve the first course so that it isn't too cold.

2 Prepare the marinade and place the lamb in it. Turn until it is well coated on all sides and leave for at least 2–3 hours, but overnight if possible.

3. Cook the mushrooms for the roulade filling.

4. Prepare the white sauce for the roulade and add the egg yolks but not the whites.

5. Prepare the vegetables and cover with clingfilm until you are ready to begin cooking

6. Remove the lamb from the marinade. Place on a rack over a roasting pan and put into the oven.

7. Heat the oil or fat for the parsnips and turn them to make sure they are thoroughly coated. Place in the oven either on the same shelf as the lamb or the one above it.

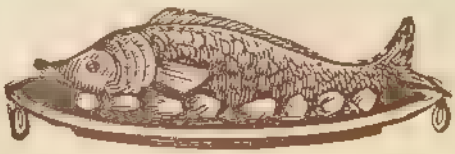
8. Whisk the egg whites for the roulade. Fold into the white sauce, turn into the prepared tin and bake on the top shelf of the oven Reheat the mushroom filling

9. Begin cooking the rice and cabbage.

10. Fill and fold the roulade. Present it on one large plate and slice at the table.

Wine

For the first course, a light, medium dry well-chilled white wine. Preferably either a hock or riesling with a full, fruity flavour. For the main course, a substantial red wine such as a Burgundy, Côtes du Rhône or claret.



— Crudités —

Raw vegetables dipped into hot or cold sauces are always popular served with drinks. Try some of the more exotic products available for extra interest Blanch baby ears of sweetcorn or the stalks from Swiss chard (the leaves can be steamed or sautéed in butter and used as a vegetable or filling for puff pastry). Tiny turnips and new potatoes, cooked until they are just tender, are especially good with a garlicky mayonnaise. Broccoli and cauliflower florets can be dipped in flavoured mayonnaise and then toasted nuts, crispy breadcrumbs or finely chopped fresh herbs. The texture of button mushrooms also contrasts beautifully with a stuffing of savoury cream cheese or breadcrumbs mixed with herbs and garlic.

Garlicky Olives —

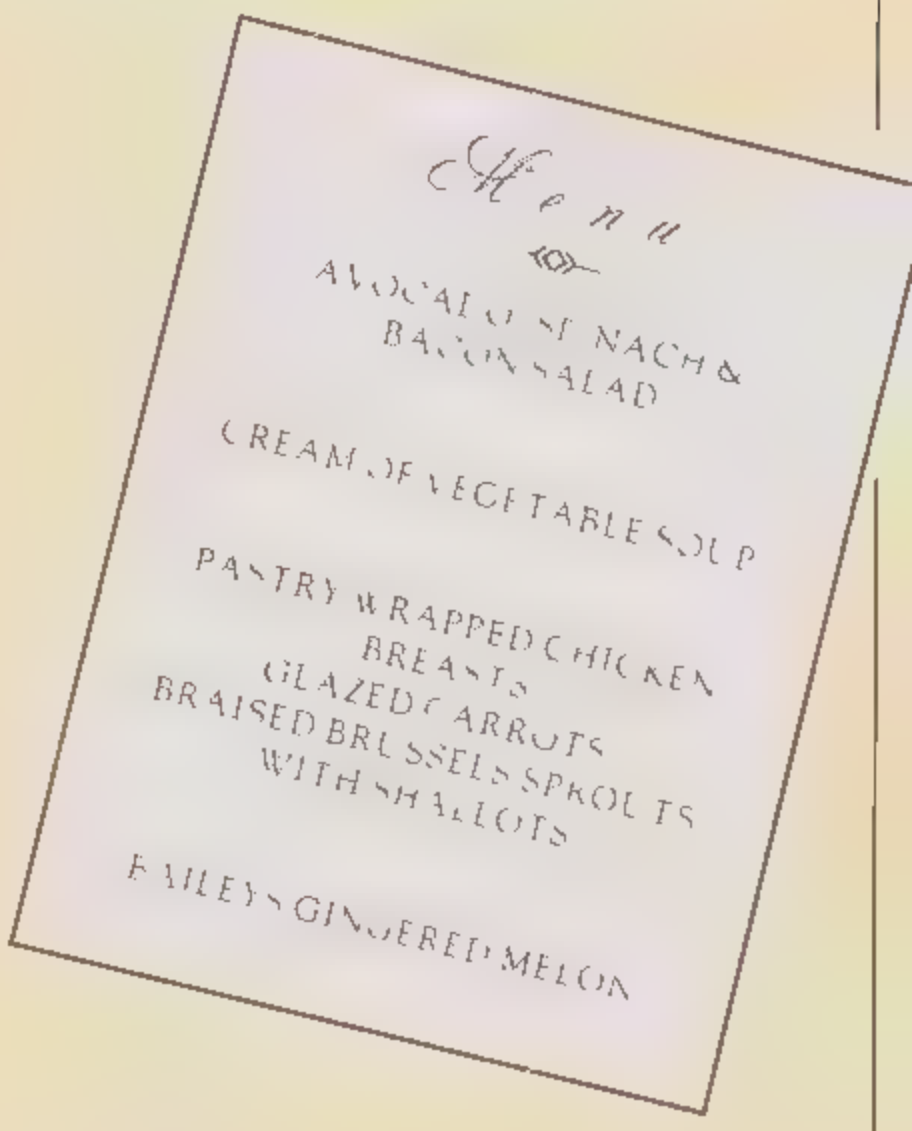
A standby that can be kept in the refrigerator for several weeks at a time, and makes ordinary olives into something a little bit special. Drain a jar of pitted green olives and transfer to a slightly larger jar. Add 4 fl oz/125 ml olive oil, 3 crushed cloves of garlic and 1 small onion, minced or finely chopped. Cover with a tight fitting lid and shake occasionally. Leave for at least two days then strain the olives and serve at room temperature.

Dinner for Eight

Dinner for eight is the perfect opportunity for planning a formal sit-down meal, using your best china, glassware and linen on the table. It is just the right number to ensure that conversation doesn't flag, no matter whether your guests are old friends or new acquaintances.

The dishes selected offer a balance of cold, light first and last courses with hot, elegant but filling main courses. If the quantities look like they might overwhelm your guests, eliminate either the salad or soup. The salad can be made with either fresh spinach or a selection of lettuces of contrasting colours, assembled in a large glass or wooden bowl and served at the table. Alternatively, each portion can be individually composed, making the most of your flair for presentation. The spinach or leaves should be decoratively arranged and interspersed with tomato wedges and chunks of avocado. Chopped egg, spring onion and bacon sprinkled on top add even more interest. Remember, too, that avocados have a tendency to turn black once they are cut, so add them to the salad at the last possible moment.

Cream of vegetable soup is delicate orange in colour, slightly sweet in flavour and offers contrasting textures with its garnish of crunchy toasted almonds and tart, buttery apple slices.



To present the main course, arrange the chicken breasts in the centre of each plate and place a row of carrots down one side and a few Brussels sprouts down the other. Include one or two shallots with each portion. The chicken can be as decorative as you like, with a pattern of leaves, diamonds or flowers cut out from the trimmings.

Finally, chilled fresh melon and spicy stem ginger are delightfully enhanced by cream flavoured with Baileys Irish Cream. Relaxing conversation around the table or in the more comfortable surroundings of your sitting room with a pot of aromatic coffee, and perhaps a small glass of Baileys to accompany it, will round off the dinner perfectly.

Avocado, Spinach & Bacon Salad

8 rashers streaky bacon
2 hardboiled eggs, chopped
4 tomatoes, quartered
4 spring onions, chopped
2 avocados
8 oz/225 g fresh spinach
4 tbsp/60 ml red wine vinegar
1 tsp/5 ml dry mustard
2 tsp/10 ml paprika
salt and pepper to taste

Remove the rind from the bacon rashers and cut into small pieces. Gently fry until brown and crisp. Drain the bacon on a piece of kitchen towel and leave to cool, but do not discard the fat.

Wash the spinach well and shake to remove all excess water. Tear into small pieces and arrange in a large salad bowl or on eight individual plates. If you cannot find fresh spinach, a mixture of curly endive (frisée), iceberg lettuce and radicchio or other red-leaved lettuce can be substituted.

Reheat the bacon fat. Add the vinegar, mustard, paprika, salt and pepper to make the dressing. Pour over the spinach or lettuces and toss gently to coat.

Cut the avocados in half, remove the stones and peel carefully. Dice and sprinkle over the greens. Arrange tomato wedges over the greens. Garnish with spring onions, egg and bacon.

Cream of Vegetable Soup

4 oz/125 g butter
4 carrots, peeled and chopped
1 small onion, peeled and chopped
4 small potatoes, peeled and chopped
2 parsnips, peeled and chopped
6 leeks, washed and sliced
4 sticks celery, diced
30 fl oz/900 ml ham, chicken or vegetable stock
salt and pepper to taste
4 tbsp/60 ml fresh coriander, finely chopped
10 fl oz/300 ml single cream
Garnish
4 oz/125 g blanched almonds
2 apples, peeled and sliced
2 oz/50 g butter

Melt the butter in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan. Add all of the vegetables, stir once, cover and leave to sweat for 5 minutes over a very low heat. Add the stock and half of the coriander leaves.

Bring the soup to boiling point, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until the vegetables are soft. Cool slightly then sieve or liquidise in a food processor or blender. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in the cream and reheat gently but do not allow the soup to boil again.

Grill the almonds until brown, stirring occasionally. Sauté the apples in melted butter until soft and golden.

Ladle the hot soup into individual bowls and serve garnished with the remaining coriander, two or three slices of apple and a few toasted almonds. Finely chopped chives and walnuts can be substituted for apples and almonds if you prefer. If you make this soup during the summer and cannot find parsnips or leeks, simply add more carrots and/or baby turnips.

Pastry Wrapped Chicken Breasts

2 lb/900 g puff pastry, defrosted
8 chicken breast fillets
1 lb/450 g mushrooms, sliced
1 red pepper, seeded and sliced
1 yellow pepper, seeded and sliced
1 green pepper, seeded and sliced
1 tsp/5 ml dried oregano
4 fl oz/125 ml olive oil
salt and pepper to taste
1 egg, beaten
1 tbsp/15 ml cold water

Saute the peppers gently in the hot olive oil until just beginning to soften, approximately 10 minutes. Sprinkle with oregano and stir frequently while cooking. If you cannot get red or yellow peppers, use all green or substitute 2 courgettes for one of the peppers.

Add the mushrooms to the peppers, stir once to coat with oil and sauté until very soft, approximately 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Leave to cool.

Cut the pastry into eight pieces and roll out as thinly as possible. Cut each piece into a neat rectangle slightly larger than the chicken breast fillets. Reserve the trimmings to decorate the finished parcels. Leave the pastry to rest for 10 minutes

Carefully arrange the vegetable mixture down the centre of the pastry pieces. Be sure to leave a margin on all sides to fold over. Place one chicken fillet on each piece of pastry and season with salt and pepper.

Combine the egg and water. Fold one long edge of pastry on top of the chicken. Brush with beaten egg. Fold the other long edge into the centre and press gently but firmly onto the glazed pastry to seal. Brush the short edges of pastry with beaten egg and fold into the centre. Press down gently to seal. Place the parcels, seam side down, on a greased baking tray. Brush the surfaces with beaten egg.

Roll out the pastry trimmings and cut into decorative shapes. Place on top of the parcels and brush once more with egg. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Bake the chicken for 30 minutes or until the pastry is well risen and golden brown. Serve immediately.

GLAZED CARROTS

2 lb/900 g carrots, peeled

4 oz/125 g unsalted butter, melted

2 tbsp/30 ml honey or golden syrup

If you can get baby carrots or finger carrots, leave them whole. If you are using large carrots, cut in half lengthways and then slice into thin julienne strips.

Toss the carrots in butter in a heavy-bottomed pan. Stir in the honey or syrup. Cover and cook until the carrots are tender, approximately 20–30 minutes.

BRAISED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

2 lb/900 g Brussels sprouts

16 shallots, peeled

8 fl oz/225 ml chicken stock

Place the vegetables in an ovenproof casserole, pour over the stock and cover. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6 and cook for 30 minutes if you like your vegetables slightly crunchy, or 45 minutes if you prefer them very soft.

BAILEYS GINGERED MELON

2 honeydew melons

6–8 knobs stem ginger, diced

10 fl oz/300 ml double cream

4 tbsp/60 ml Baileys Irish Cream

Cut the melons in half and remove all the seeds. Scoop the flesh out with a melon baller or carefully cut out chunks with a sharp knife and dice. Put the fruit and any juice that has accumulated into one large serving dish or eight individual dishes or glasses or back into the melon shell itself. Sprinkle with ginger. Chill.

Combine the Baileys Irish Cream and double cream. Whisk until it is just firm enough to hold its shape. Carefully spoon a swirl of cream onto each individual serving or pipe around the outside of the bowl or melon shell. Serve the remainder separately.

— Timetable —

1. Prepare the soup up to the stage where the cream is added. Do not add the cream until you have reheated the soup just before serving.

2. Toast the blanched almonds.

3. Cook the eggs for the salad but do not shell.

4. Sauté the peppers and mushrooms for the chicken parcels.

5. Prepare the melon and ginger for dessert. Cover and chill.

6. Peel the carrots and cover with clingfilm. Trim the Brussels sprouts, peel the shallots. Place in a covered casserole but do not add the stock until you are ready to begin cooking.

7. Assemble the chicken parcels but do not glaze until you are ready to begin cooking. You can decorate the chicken with pastry trimmings at this point. Cover with clingfilm.

8. Prepare the spinach or lettuces for the salad but do not dress. Cook the bacon, drain and set aside. Reserve the fat ready to be reheated for the dressing. Peel and chop the eggs; trim and cut the spring onions and tomatoes. Cover until you are ready to assemble the salad.

9. Add the stock to the Brussels sprouts and place on a low shelf in the oven. Begin reheating the soup. Glaze the chicken and place on a shelf above the sprouts. Sauté the apple slices for the soup. Whisk Baileys Irish Cream with double cream. Cover and chill.

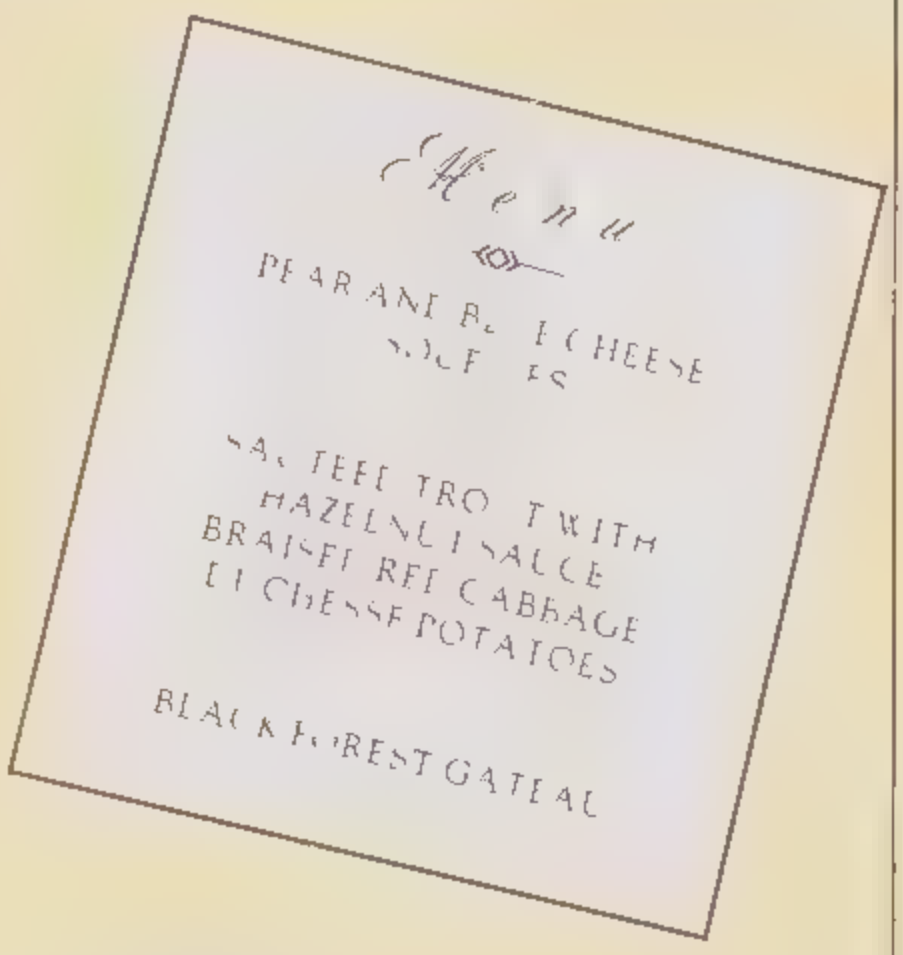
10. Stir the cream into the soup. Heat very gently but do not allow the soup to boil again.

11. Peel and slice the avocados. Reheat the bacon fat and make the salad dressing. Dress and toss the salad. Add the avocado, tomato, spring onions, bacon and egg.

— Wine —

The same wine should be served for both the first and main courses of this dinner to provide continuity. Choose a dry white from the Loire Valley such as Muscadet, Sancerre or Saumur. A California white wine would also be suitable. Alternatively, serve Croft sherry, either Particular or Fino with the soup and save the wine for the main course.

– Dinner for Four –



By very nature of its numbers, dinner for four is a more intimate occasion than a larger party. It thus gives you two options. You can either relax and make the evening very informal, or you can allow yourself free reign when shopping and cooking. You may be able to spend a little bit more on ingredients when cooking for a few. Likewise, you can experiment in the kitchen and create more elaborate dishes than you might for a larger group. It is the perfect opportunity to get carried away with yourself. This menu will, admittedly, take some pretty hard work to get right, but both the challenge and the dining should make it well worth while.

The techniques required for this dinner are varied. Pear and blue cheese soufflés involve a number of steps, from poaching the fruit to timing the dinner exactly. Cooking time is reduced by preparing individual ramekins rather than one large dish, which means that you do not have to rush guests to the table if they are lingering over drinks. You can wait until the conversation begins to settle then pop the ramekins into the oven and let everyone dawdle into the dining room. Then, once the wine is poured, you can make a grand entrance with a tray of perfectly risen soufflés.

Sweet and savoury are again combined for the main course, with orange butter in the hazelnut sauce and apples braised with the red cabbage. The contrast of flavours and textures makes the meal very rich, an excellent excuse for taking it slowly, lingering over the food and savouring the sensations it offers. For a grand finale, Black Forest Gateau with its sinful combination of cream and chocolate, makes such a decadent and wicked dessert that your party cannot help but be an occasion to remember.

Pear and Blue Cheese Soufflés

5 fl oz/150 ml water
4 oz/125 g sugar
1 pear, peeled and quartered
1 tbsp/15 ml butter
1 tbsp/15 ml flour
5 fl oz/150 ml milk
1 egg yolk
2 egg whites
2 oz/50 g blue cheese, crumbled

Heat the water with the sugar, stirring constantly, until the sugar dissolves. Boil for 5 minutes to make a syrup. Add the pear and poach gently for 10 minutes or until tender. Drain and dice the pears. Divide between four buttered ramekins.

Prepare a white sauce (see page 150) with the butter, flour and milk. Add the egg yolk and mix well. Add the cheese to the sauce and stir over a low light until smooth.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Gently fold two spoonsful into the sauce to loosen the mixture then gradually add the remainder. Spoon into the ramekins and place on a baking sheet.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the soufflés for 15 minutes or until well risen. Serve immediately.

SAUTÉED TROUT WITH HAZELNUT SAUCE

2 oz/50 g hazelnuts

5 oz/150 g butter

1 tsp/5 ml orange rind, finely grated

3 tbsp/45 ml Cointreau

4 trout, cleaned

seasoned flour

¼ pt/150 ml double cream

1 orange, thinly sliced

Shell the hazelnuts and bake for 15 minutes at 110C/225F/Gas ¼. Rub in a clean tea towel to remove the skins. If you are using ready shelled nuts this stage is not necessary. Grind the hazelnuts in a food processor or liquidiser. Add 2 oz/50 g butter, the orange rind and the Cointreau. Blend until smooth. Chill until ready to use.

Dust the trout with seasoned flour. Melt the remaining butter in a heavy bottomed frying pan. Sauté the trout for 5 minutes on each side. Transfer to individual plates and keep warm.

Add the hazelnut butter to the pan and cook, stirring constantly, until the butter has melted. Blend in the cream and heat gently until just beginning to bubble. Spoon over the trout and serve garnished with orange slices and Duchesse potatoes.

Braised Red Cabbage

4 tbsp/60 ml chicken, duck or bacon fat
2 tbsp/30 ml sugar
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 lb/450 g red cabbage, thinly sliced
2 cooking apples, seeded and sliced
2 tbsp/30 ml red wine vinegar
2 tsp/10 ml caraway seeds

Stir the sugar into melted fat until it begins to brown. Margarine can also be substituted. Add the onion. Cook until golden.

Place the cabbage and apples in a large saucepan. Pour over the onion mixture. Toss well to coat. Sprinkle with vinegar and caraway seeds. Cover and cook for 20–45 minutes depending on how soft you want the cabbage to be. Stir occasionally and add a little water if necessary to prevent the cabbage sticking.

Duchesse Potatoes

2 lb/1 kg potatoes, boiled and mashed
salt and pepper
knob of butter
1 egg, beaten

Combine all the ingredients. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Pipe the potato into mounds approximately 2 inches/5 cm high on a greased baking sheet. Alternatively, shape carefully with two teaspoons. Bake for 25 minutes or until golden brown. Lift off the tray with a spatula and place around the edge of each plate.

Black Forest Gateau

Chocolate Cake
6 oz/175 vegetable margarine
10 oz/300 g sugar
3 eggs
1½ tsp/7½ ml vanilla
10 oz/300 g plain flour
2 tsp/10 ml baking powder
1¼ tsp/6 ml bicarbonate of soda
pinch salt
2 oz/50 g unsweetened cocoa
12 fl oz/350 ml water
Filling
2 oz/50 g sugar
2 oz/50 g cornflour
pinch cinnamon
5 fl oz/150 ml cherry juice
1 lb/450 g tin black cherries, stoned
8 fl oz/225 ml double cream
4 fl oz/125 ml Kirsch
1 oz/25 g plain chocolate, grated

Cream the margarine and sugar for the cake until very light and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each. Mix in the vanilla.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Sieve together the dry ingredients. Add to the egg mixture, alternating with the water. Mix well. Turn into two sandwich tins, 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter. Bake for 30–35 minutes or until the centre springs back when gently pressed.

Cool the cakes in their pans for 10 minutes then turn onto a wire rack and leave until completely cold. Carefully cut each cake into two layers.

Combine the sugar, cornflour and cinnamon with 3 tbsp/45 ml cherry juice. Bring the remaining juice to the boil, stir into the cornflour mixture and return to the heat. Cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce boils and thickens. Add the cherries and leave to cool.

Whisk the cream until it is thick enough to hold its shape. Flavour with half of the Kirsch. Sprinkle the remaining Kirsch over the cake.

To assemble the Black Forest Gateau, spread three of the layers with cherries and two-thirds of the cream. Stack carefully and place the last layer on top. Decorate with the remaining cream and sprinkle with grated chocolate.

— Timetable —

1. Bake the chocolate cake. Cool thoroughly, assemble and chill for at least 2 hours but not overnight. Remove from the refrigerator when you put the soufflés into the oven.

2. Make the hazelnut butter and chill until firm.

3. Poach the pears. Prepare the white sauce for the souffle and add the cheese but not the egg whites.

4. Boil, mash and cool the potatoes. Pipe onto a baking sheet. Cover until ready to begin cooking.

5. Prepare the cabbage and begin cooking.

6. Dice the pears and place in the ramekins. Whisk the egg whites, fold into the souffle sauce and spoon into ramekins. Bake the soufflés.

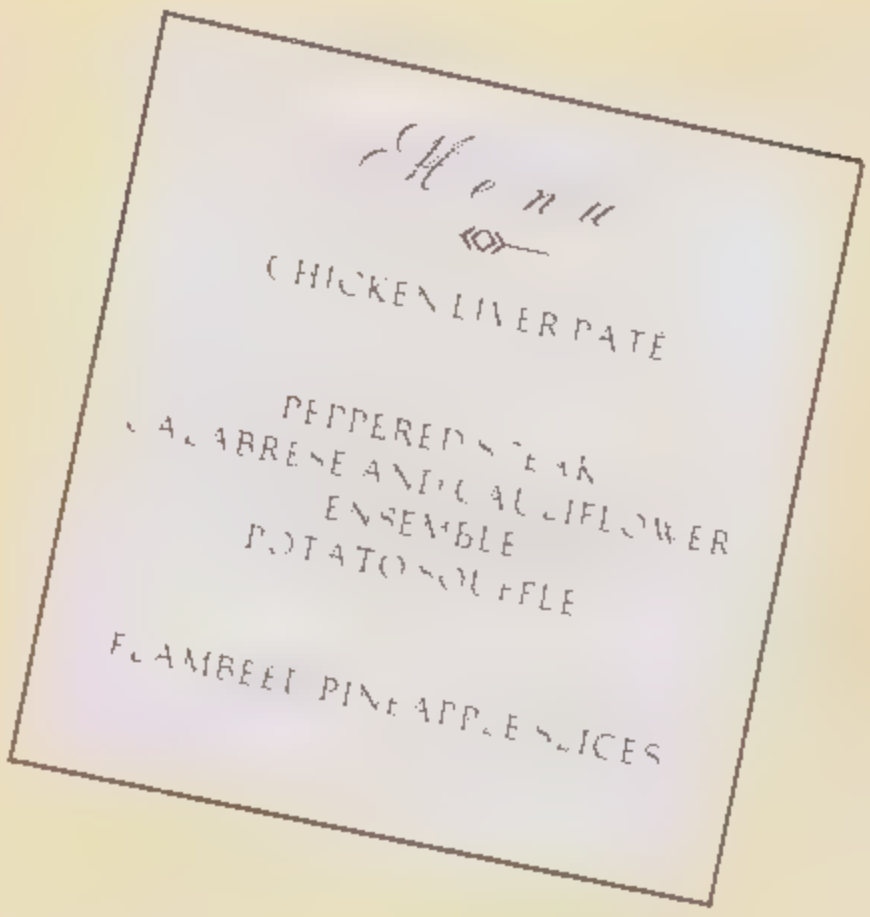
7. When the souffles come out of the oven, put the Duchesse potatoes into the oven.

8. After the soufles have been eaten and cleared away, saute the trout. While it is cooking, slice the orange. Serve the trout on individual dishes garnished with orange slices and potatoes. Pass the cabbage separately in a large bowl.

— Wine —

As the food for this meal is all on the sweet side, serve medium white wine throughout. A semi-sparkling wine from Italy or Portugal would go well with the soufflés. A California wine or Chablis would go well with the trout.

Dinner for Six



Every menu revolves in some way around a single focal point. One dish, whether because of its cost or its flavour, will determine its accompaniments. The combinations must be selected with care and you must decide whether to complement or contrast.

For this dinner party, peppered steak dominates everything served with it so we have chosen dishes that will not be totally overpowered.

Smooth chicken liver pâté served with toast and a salad garnish leads gently into the dramatic high point of the meal. If you wish, a smaller amount of pepper, or green peppercorns for variety, can be substituted for the quantities given but the steak should be highly seasoned whatever you do.

A dish of calabrese and cauliflower arranged in alternate rows or a decorative flower pattern absorbs some of the fire, as does the potato soufflé. A mixture of creamed potatoes and cheese, lightened with sour cream and egg whites, it is not a true soufflé, airy and risen to great heights. But it does look attractive and blends particularly well with both the texture and flavour of the steak.

Dessert provides the contrast in the menu with the sharpness of fresh pineapple being offset by apricot jam and Cointreau. As an alternative, prepare crêpes to your favourite recipe, fold in quarters and reheat in butter. Pour a spoonful of warmed Cointreau or Cognac over each crepe and set alight. Top each one with a pineapple ring, baked according to the recipe on page 43. Serve immediately and pass a dish of ice cream or sweetened whipped cream separately.

Finish dinner with a pot of freshly brewed coffee and liqueurs to ensure that the mellow mood brings the evening to a suitable relaxed conclusion.

Chicken Liver Pâté

1 lb/450 g chicken livers
5 oz/150 g butter
1 clove garlic, crushed
salt and pepper
pinch each mixed spice, parsley, marjoram, thyme
2 fl oz/50 ml Cinzano Bianco or Dry
2 tbsp/30 ml brandy

Sauté the chicken livers in 2 oz/50 g butter until they are just firm. Add the garlic and seasoning. Mix well and cook for 2 minutes longer. Leave to cool for a few minutes then put into a liquidiser or food processor. Blend with the Cinzano and brandy until smooth.

Soften the remaining butter with the back of a spoon and thoroughly blend with the liver. Check the seasoning. Turn into a small loaf pan, cool and chill until ready to serve. Garnish slices of pâté with thinly sliced cucumber and a sprinkling of mustard and cress.

Peppered Steak

6 sirloin, entrecôte, fillet or rump steaks
3 tbsp/45 ml whole black peppercorns
3 oz/75 g unsalted butter
1 tbsp/15 ml olive oil
4 fl oz/125 ml Le Piat D'Or Red

Coarsely crush the peppercorns using either a mortar and pestle or a rolling pin on a wooden board. Take care that they do not fly all over the kitchen! Press onto both sides of the steaks.

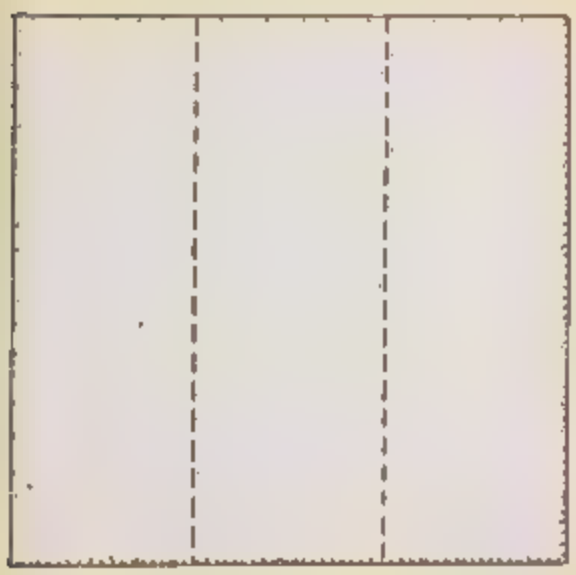
Melt the butter with the olive oil until sizzling. Add the steaks to the pan. Cook over a very high heat for 2 minutes on each side to seal the meat then reduce the heat and cook for a further 4 minutes for rare steaks, 6 minutes for medium steaks and 8 minutes for well-done steaks. The timing may vary according to the thickness of the meat, so remember to allow for this. Transfer the steaks onto a large serving dish and keep warm.

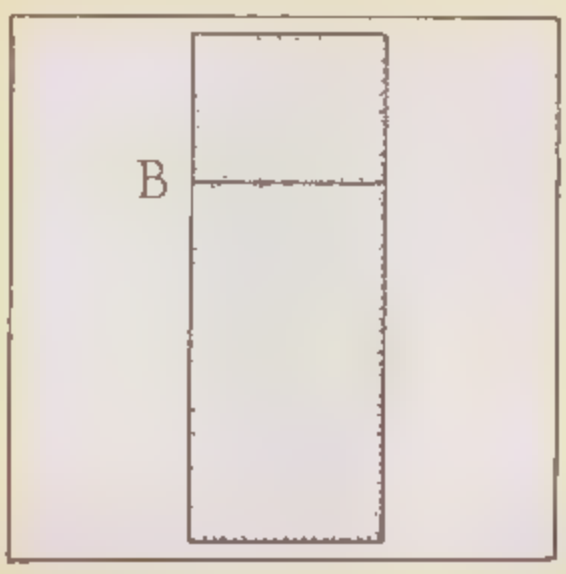
Stir the wine into the pan juices, scraping up any bits sticking to the pan. Bring to the boil. Spoon over the steaks and serve at once.

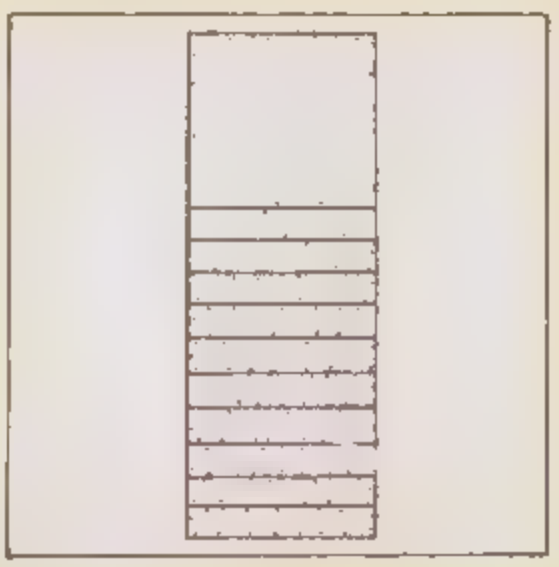
— Napkin Folds —

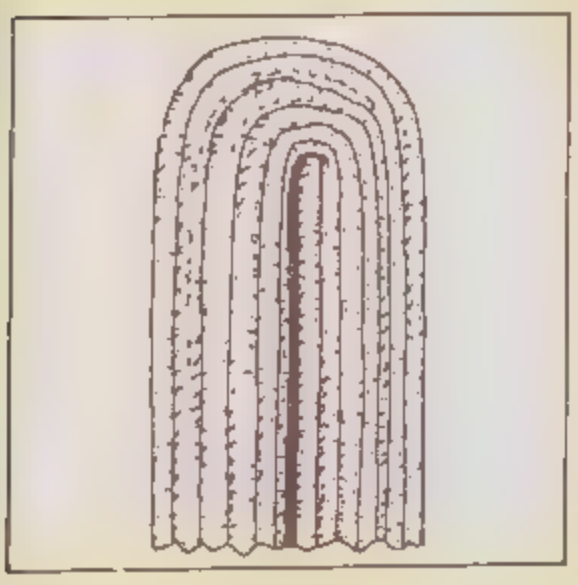
A fan-shaped napkin

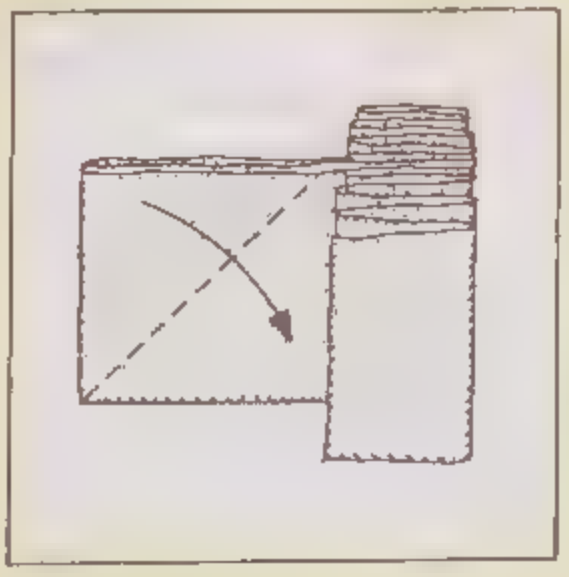
1. Beginning with a square linen or paper napkin, fold into thirds as in the diagram.
2. Fold the napkin as indicated by line B, leaving 6 inches (15 cm) at the top
3. Pleat the napkin from the bottom up to line B.
4. Fold in half as indicated in the diagram.
5. Fold along the dotted line to make a base to support the folded napkin
6. Open the pleats and fan out the napkin.

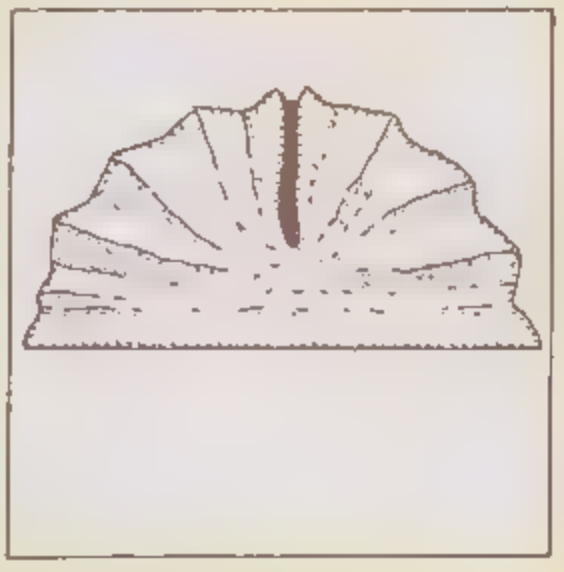












POTATO SOUFFLÉ

3 tbsp/45 ml butter
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 lb/1 kg potatoes, boiled and mashed
2 tbsp/30 ml sour cream or natural yoghurt
2 tbsp/30 ml double cream
2 eggs, separated
salt and pepper
1 tbsp/15 ml fresh parsley, tarragon or thyme
4 oz/125 g cheese, grated

Soften the onion and garlic in melted butter. Add to the mashed potatoes along with the sour cream or yoghurt, double cream and egg yolks. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the chopped herbs and cheese. Any hard cheese you have available can be used – Cheddar, Red Leicester, Emmental, Gruyère etc.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Carefully fold two spoonsful into the potato mixture to loosen it then gradually add the remainder. Pour into a well greased soufflé dish. Bake for 30 minutes or until the top is golden brown.

FLAMBÉED PINEAPPLE SLICES

1 medium pineapple, peeled and cored

3 tbsp/45 ml apricot jam

2 tbsp/30 ml Cointreau

Cut the pineapple into six slices. Arrange in a large ovenproof dish and spread each slice with apricot jam. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Bake for 5–10 minutes or until the pineapple is hot and the jam bubbling. Pour over the Cointreau and serve immediately.

Timetable

1 Prepare the pate Turn into a loaf pan and chill for at least 3 hours but preferably overnight Remove the pate from the refrigerator and its pan 1 hour before serving so that it reaches room temperature. It should be sliced while cold, however.

2. Boil and mash the potatoes Soften the onion and garlic Leave until cold then prepare the soufflé but do not add the egg whites.

3 Wash and trim the cauliflower and calabrese. Cover with cling film until you are ready to begin cooking.

4 Crush the peppercorns Wipe the steaks with a clean, damp cloth and remove the fat. Press the peppercorns onto both sides of each steak Leave in the refrigerator until 15 minutes before you are ready to begin cooking.

4 Peel and slice the pineapple Arrange in a baking dish, spread with jam and cover until ready to bake.

5 Whisk the egg whites Fold into the potato mixture, pour into a souffle dish and bake.

6. Toast bread to serve with the pate Arrange slices of pate on each plate and garnish

7. Begin cooking the vegetables.

8. When the pâte has been eaten and cleared away, cook the steaks

9 While you are clearing away the main course, pop the pineapple into the oven to heat.

Wine

Serve a light, dry red wine such as Piat Beaujolais or Chianti with the pate and a full-bodied red wine, possibly a Burgundy or substantial Italian Barolo with the main course. As the steak is very highly seasoned, the wine has to be fairly rough and hearty to survive.

Buffets and Informal Entertaining

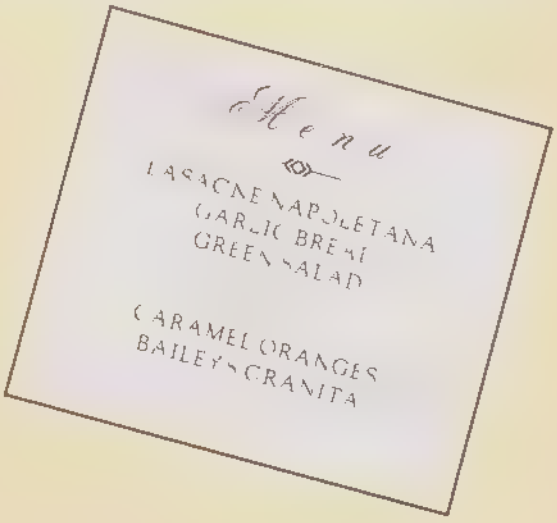
Buffets and Informal Entertaining

Buffet Supper for Twenty

Space can often be a problem when planning a party for twenty or more people. For a very large party or special occasion, there is good reason to consider hiring a marquee or a local hall. If you are brave, you can aim at a summer date and hope for fine enough weather to spread into the garden. But if you are coping with a large group indoors, you must assume that guests will eat standing up or perched with plates balanced precariously on their knees. So forks and fingers only must suffice.

When choosing the main dish, try to include ingredients that will be filling and go a long way. Then set up an assembly line. Cooking in bulk can take a long time and makes reheating difficult so it is better to use several small dishes or pans rather than one enormous one. To avoid congestion at the table, serve two dishes at a time while keeping the remaining food hot. Keep an eye out and refill or replace as necessary.

The important points to consider when choosing a menu also include cost and how to turn fairly inexpensive and easily available ingredients into special dishes. Although the party will be in full swing before you actually begin serving the food, it keeps the momentum going and ensures that a good time is had by all. Cassoulet, a mixture of haricot beans, garlic sausage, lamb and poultry from France is a very filling one-dish possibility. Chilli, made with minced beef, kidney beans and tomatoes can be served with tortillas (stocked now by most supermarkets) and a variety of garnishes including shredded lettuce, grated cheese, raw onion and hot peppers. That well known Greek dish, Moussaka, consists of layers of minced beef or lamb, aubergines, tomatoes and potatoes topped with a cheese sauce. It is delicious served with a salad of tomatoes or cucumber with mint yoghurt. Bobotie, a South African speciality, is curried minced beef or lamb mixed with sultanas and topped with a savoury egg and cheese custard. Any of these would be delicious and successful alternatives to the menu given.



LASAGNE NAPOLETANA

Meat Sauce
2 lb/1 kg minced beef
2 lb/1 kg Italian sausage, mild and/or spicy
2 cloves garlic, crushed
2 tsp/10 ml dried oregano
2 tsp/10 ml dried basil
2 tsp/10 ml salt
pinch sugar
6 × 14 oz/400 g tins sieved tomatoes (Passata)
Filling
2 lb/1 kg ricotta cheese
4 eggs
1 tbsp/15 ml dried parsley
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
2 lb/1 kg mozzarella cheese, grated
8 oz/225 g Parmesan cheese, grated
2 lb/1 kg lasagne noodles

Prepare the meat sauce the day before your party. The longer it cooks, the better it will be and the flavour improves if left overnight. If you cannot get Italian sausage, add 8 oz/225 g diced peperoni, chorizo or something similar along with the tomatoes. Make up the remaining amount of meat with minced pork and/or veal. For a spicy sauce, add crushed red chillis to taste.

To make the sauce, simply remove the skin from the sausages and brown along with the meat, stirring frequently. Add all the remaining ingredients, mix well, cover and simmer over a very low light for 4–6 hours. Stir occasionally and check the seasoning. Leave overnight. If you cannot find Passata, sieve or liquidise tinned tomatoes and add 4 tbsp/60 ml tomato purée so that the cooked sauce isn't too thin.

Bring a very large pan of water to the boil with 1 tsp/5 ml salt and 1 tbsp/15 ml oil. Add the noodles one at a time and stir occasionally so that they don't stick together. You will not be able to cook more than a few noodles at a time. Cook each batch for 8–10 minutes or until just soft and remove one at a time. Rinse with cold water and lay on a clean tea towel to drain. Do not stack them. Continue until all the noodles have been cooked.

Beat the ricotta cheese with the eggs until very light and fluffy. Add the herbs and garlic. Mix well. If you cannot get ricotta cheese, use curd cheese or cottage cheese (sieved to remove the large curds).

Assemble the lasagne in two large roasting pans or ovenproof casseroles. Spread the bottom of each pan with meat sauce. Arrange a layer of noodles, slightly overlapping, on top. Spread with ricotta and sprinkle with mozzarella and Parmesan. Spoon over some sauce. Place more noodles on top. Continue repeating the layers until you have used all the ricotta and mozzarella. End with a layer of noodles. Pour the last of the sauce on top and sprinkle with Parmesan. Cover with tin foil and bake for 1 hour at 190C/375F/Gas 5.

The lasagne can be prepared days or weeks ahead of time and kept in the refrigerator or freezer. Do not bake it until the evening of the party. It should be defrosted first, but you can bake it directly from the freezer if that is more convenient. Just be sure to allow extra time!

GARLIC BREAD

5 loaves French bread

1 lb/450 g butter, softened

5 cloves garlic, crushed

2 tbsp/30 ml fresh parsley, chopped

Cut the loaves of bread in half lengthways. Cream the butter, garlic and parsley together. Spread over both halves of each loaf. Put the bread together again and cut into slices approximately 2 inches (5 cm) thick. Wrap each loaf in tin foil and bake for 15 minutes at 190C/375F/Gas 5.

CARAMEL ORANGES

20 oranges

5 pints/2½ litres water

5 lb/2¼ kg sugar

Carefully remove the skin from the oranges and cut into thin strips. Take care not to leave any of the white pith on the skin. Plunge the peel into a large pan of boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain well. Repeat this process twice more using fresh water each time to remove any bitterness from the skin.

Remove the pith and membrane from the oranges and slice thinly. Place the orange slices in a large serving dish.

Stir the sugar in the water over a low heat until it has dissolved. Raise the heat and boil the syrup for 15 minutes. Pour over the oranges and leave for 2–3 hours. Drain the syrup from the oranges and boil for a further 15 minutes. Pour over the orange slices again, sprinkle with orange peel and leave to cool.

BAILEYS GRANITA

1½ lb/675 g sugar

4 pints/2 litres water

1 pint/600 ml Baileys Irish Cream

Dissolve the sugar in the water over a low heat. Leave to cool then stir in Baileys Irish Cream. Pour into shallow freezer-proof containers and freeze until the liquid is icy at the edges. Stir thoroughly and return to the freezer. Repeat this process several times until the desired fineness of granulation is reached.

Granita should be made no more than one day before your party or it will begin to lose its flavour.

— Timetable —

1. The day before your party, prepare the tomato sauce for the lasagne and leave to simmer for as long as possible. Cool overnight.

2 Blanch the orange strips and prepare the syrup. Pour over the oranges and leave to cool.

3 Prepare and freeze the granita. Remember to stir it at regular intervals, perhaps once every 2 hours, depending on the temperature of your freezer. If the granita gets too solid, it can be whizzed in a food processor or liquidiser for a few seconds to break it up

4 Drain the syrup from the oranges, reboil then pour over the fruit again. Leave to cool completely.

5 Prepare the cheeses for the lasagne. Boil and drain the noodles. Leave on a clean tea towel to cool.

6 Prepare the garlic bread Wrap in tin foil ready to pop in the oven later on.

7. Prepare the salad and dressing but do not mix.

8. Assemble the lasagne and cover with foil.

9. When your guests have arrived and the evening is getting well under way, bake the lasagne and garlic bread. Cut the lasagne into portions in the kitchen, but serve directly from the dish it was baked in. Remember that it is very rich - do not make the portions over large. Hungry guests can always come back for seconds.

10 Arrange the bread in baskets or on plates Dress and toss the salad just before serving.

11. Transfer the granita from the freezer to the refrigerator when you serve the lasagne so that it softens slightly Mix roughly with a fork just before placing it on the table.

— Wine —

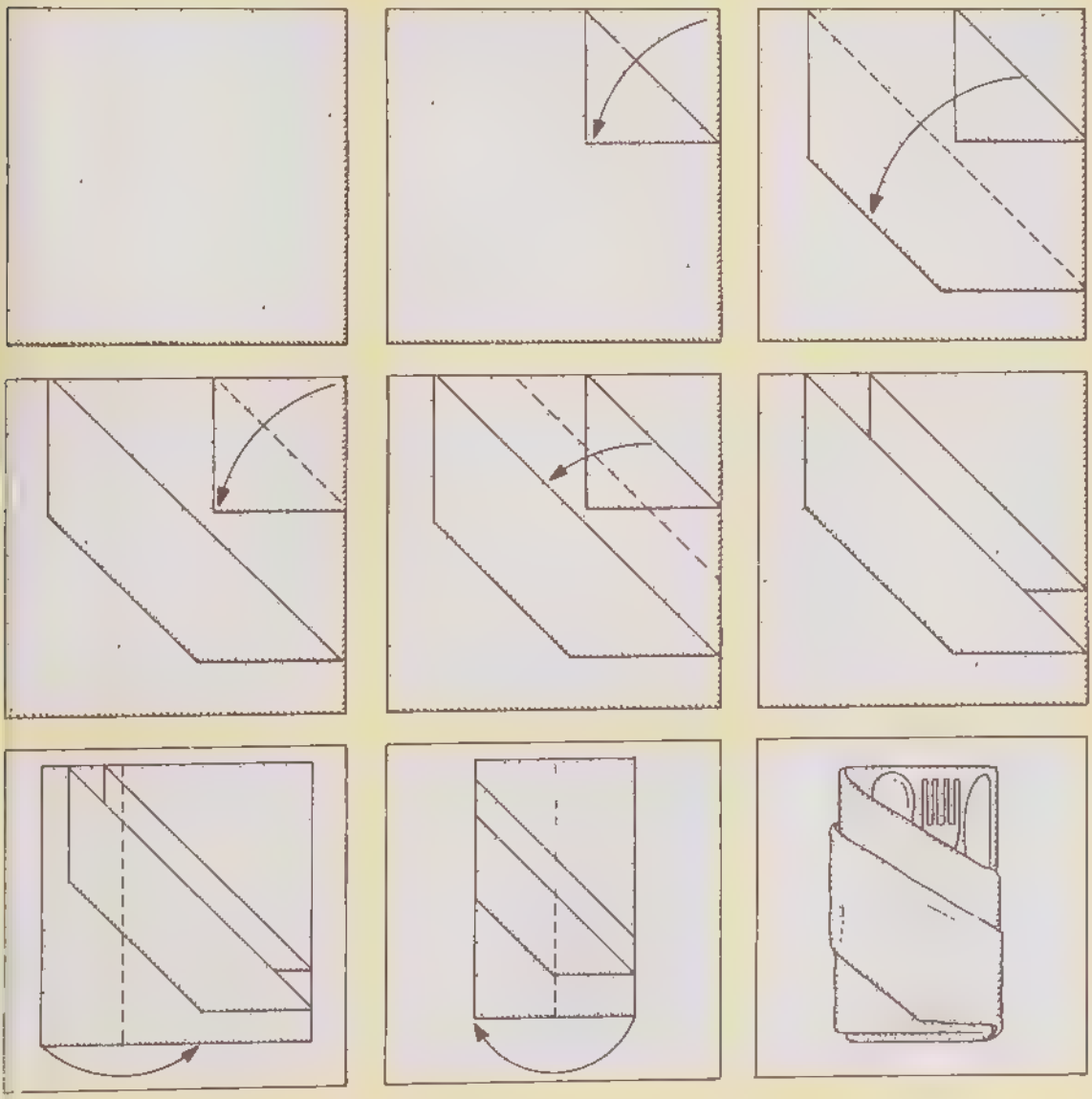
As guests will be drinking all evening long, choose a fairly inexpensive and light red wine Chianti or Valpolicella would be ideal. For those who prefer white wine, offer Frascati or Soave. Lager and light ale also go well with this type of food.

— Napkin Folds —

A buffet napkin

1 Beginning with a square linen or paper napkin, fold into four ensuring that the loose edges are in the top right hand corner.

2. Fold the top right hand corner down as in the diagram.
3. Fold along the dotted line.
4. Fold a second flap as in the diagram.
5. Fold along the dotted line.
6. Tuck the second fold underneath the first fold.
7. Fold along the dotted line. The fold should be underneath.
8. Fold along the dotted line.
9. Slip the cutlery inside the folds as indicated.

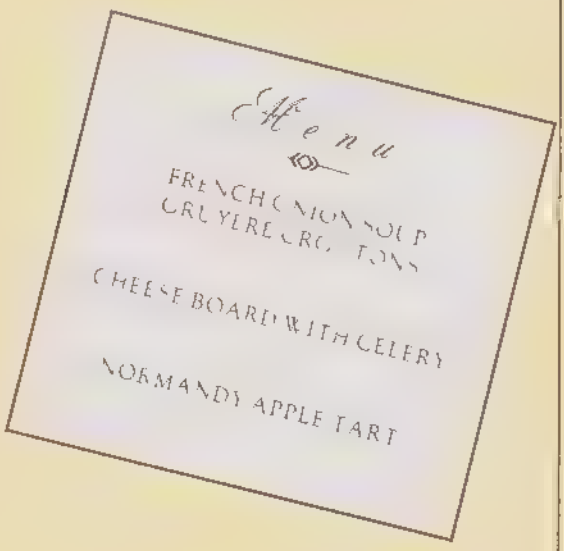


Buffets and Informal Entertaining

Late Supper for Six

There are times after an evening with friends, either at the theatre or a dance, or just at home playing cards, Trivia or whatever the latest craze may be, that a light supper is called for. A full meal late at night would be too much, but a substantial snack can round off a pleasant evening beautifully. Onion soup is traditionally served in France at cafés catering to anyone awake in the small hours for good reason. It is hearty and warming, substantial with its crusty cheese topping, and good for you in every way. Prepared in advance, it simply needs reheating when you are ready for it. The croûtons and pie can bake while you arrange the cheese board. This should be a selection of soft French cheeses, perhaps including one goat's cheese coated with herbs or pepper, and one blue cheese. If you prefer, an assortment of English cheeses can be offered instead, but try to stick to one nationality and avoid pre-packaged cheeses if at all possible. A bunch of fresh grapes to decorate the board adds a special touch. Biscuits and any of the crusty bread not used for the croûtons should accompany the cheese.

For a very informal late night snack with close friends, try a pizza or hero party. Prepare pizza bases from the bread recipe on page 155. Each person then chooses from an assortment of toppings—tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, spicy sausage, seafood, herbs, fried onions and/or mushrooms etc. and the pizzas are baked for 10 minutes in a very hot oven or until the cheese is melted and the base crispy. For heroes, give each person a chunk of French bread and offer a selection of fillings—cold meats, cheese and salad plus spreads such as mustard, tomato ketchup and mayonnaise. Dessert could be Do It Yourself ice cream sundaes from as many flavours as you can manage and garnishes such as Baileys coffee and chocolate sauces (see page 106), fresh or tinned fruit, nuts and cream. The sky is the limit as far as ingredients are concerned.



FRENCH ONION SOUP

2 oz/50 g butter
1 lb/450 g onions, thinly sliced
2 tbsp/30 ml plain flour
4 pints/2 litres water or stock
pinch salt
pinch sugar
1 bay leaf

Melt the butter in a heavy bottomed saucepan. Add the onions and stir until well coated. Use Spanish or red onions if possible. Cover the pan and cook over a very low light for 30 minutes. Remove the cover and cook the onions, stirring occasionally, for a further 30 minutes or until they are soft and golden brown.

Stir the flour into the onions. Gradually add the water or stock, stirring constantly. Add the salt, sugar and bay leaf. Simmer for 30 minutes. Serve with Gruyère Croûtons.

Ham stock gives the soup a particularly delicious flavour – simply boil a piece of unsalted bacon with a bay leaf, celery stalk and onion stuck with cloves until the meat is tender. Cool the meat in the stock then remove and use for another meal. The stock can be frozen until you need it and is excellent for both soup and sauces.

Gruyère Croûtons

6 thick slices crusty bread
3 oz/75 g unsalted butter
6 oz/175 g Gruyère, grated

Butter both sides of each slice of bread. Place on a baking sheet and sprinkle with cheese. Bake for 10 minutes at 200C/400F/Gas 6 or until the cheese has melted and the bread is crisp.

Normandy Apple Tart

Pastry
6 oz/175 g plain flour
1 tsp/5 ml baking powder
2 tsp/10 ml icing sugar
pinch salt
4 oz/125 g unsalted butter
1 egg, beaten
3 tbsp/45 ml water
Filling
4 oz/125 g unsalted butter, softened
4 oz/125 g sugar
1 lb/450 g cooking apples, peeled and sliced
1 tbsp/15 ml lemon juice

Sieve the flour with the baking powder and icing sugar. Add the salt. Rub in the butter until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Stir the combined egg and water into the flour a little bit at a time to bind the dough. Wrap in clingfilm or tin foil and chill for 1 hour.

Spread the butter for the filling over the base of an 8 inch (20 cm) diameter pie dish, preferably metal. Sprinkle with sugar. Toss the apple slices with lemon juice and arrange in the pan.

Roll out the pastry and place over the top of the pie, sealing the edges with water. Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7 and bake the pie for 45 minutes. The pastry will be very dark brown and crispy. If it is cooking too quickly, turn the temperature down slightly.

To serve the pie, loosen the edges with a knife, place a serving dish on top and turn over quickly. Carefully remove the pie dish. Serve hot, on its own or with cream or ice cream.

— Timetable —

1 If you are making your own stock, do this first. Soften the onions and make the soup. Remove the bay leaf.

2. Make the pastry and chill.

3. Grate the cheese, butter the bread and prepare the croutons Cover until you are ready to bake them.

4. Prepare the apples and leave in a bowl of water with a squeeze of lemon juice until you are ready to assemble the pie As apples turn brown very quickly, you can put the pie together while the oven is preheating.

5. Trim the celery and cover with clingfilm.

6. Soften the butter and spread over the base of the pie dish.

7. Reheat the soup.

8. Roll out the pastry, assemble the pie and place on the middle shelf of the oven.

9. Bake the croûtons on the top shelf of the oven.

10. Arrange the cheeseboard.

11. Ladle the soup into bowls and top each one with a croûton.

— Wine —

Remember that this is a late night supper and your friends will be driving home shortly after they have eaten. They may well want something to sip while nibbling at the cheese, however, so open a bottle of a fairly good wine that they can savour but not quaff St Emilion or Medoc are suitable red wines, Chablis or Macon are appropriate white wines.

— Baileys Plus

Baileys Irish Cream is a singular classic, but why not try introducing it to a few other drinks?

With ice: the coolest way to enjoy the cream.

With brandy: blend ⅓ gill of Baileys with ⅓ gill of brandy in a balloon glass. The slowest of ways to wind down after dinner.

With Malibu: equal proportions of Baileys and Malibu. The Emerald Isle meets the Tropical Isle.

With soda: use a full measure of Baileys, topped up with soda water, broken up with ice and topped with a slice.

With milk: two measures of milk to one of Baileys. This really is a drop of the soft stuff.

As a hot punch: mix ⅓ gill of Baileys with ⅓ gill of whisky in a mug and top up with piping hot milk. On a cold night its warmth will spread right down to your toes.

With coffee: add a full measure of Baileys and you won't find a more Irish coffee.

— Omelettes —

Whatever the occasion, omelettes can be the perfect solution to last-minute entertaining. They can be as thin as crepes, stacked and sliced to make cocktail tidbits. Vary the colour and flavour by mixing a spoonful of tomato puree into one batch before cooking, finely chopped herbs or pureed spinach into another and grated cheese into the remainder. Thin omelettes can also be filled and rolled to serve as a first course. Vegetables, fruit, herbs, cheese, fresh or smoked fish, poultry or meat can be used as fillings according to availability. Topped with a savoury sauce and flashed under the grill to brown, they look as delicious as they taste.

For a luncheon party or light supper, soufflé omelettes or Spanish omelettes are ideal. To make a souffle omelette, separate the eggs and whisk the whites with a pinch of cream tartar until they are stiff but not dry. Carefully fold into the whisked yolks and cook, covered, over a very low heat until it doubles in size. Transfer to a buttered ovenproof dish, spoon over whatever filling you have chosen and fold in half. Bake the omelette for 5 minutes at 200C/400F/Gas 6. To make a really sensational impression on your guests, pour over a spoonful of warmed rum or brandy and carry, flaming, to the table.

Spanish omelettes are totally different. Cooked meat, fish, poultry and vegetables are added to the beaten eggs and cooked all together to make a thick cake. You will not be able to turn or fold the omelette, so once the bottom is firm it needs to be popped under the grill to set the surface. Grated cheese can also be sprinkled on top and browned. Serve in wedges with salad and crusty bread.

— Brunch —

Brunch is a relaxing and casual form of entertaining, best offered to weekend guests who meander into the dining room after browsing through their newspapers and sipping tea or coffee in bed. It is also a suitable time to entertain friends or business colleagues in medium-sized groups, offering an ambience less formal than an early evening buffet but more formal than a barbecue for instance. As it gets the day off on a leisurely track, it leaves open the option for departure. Close friends can linger on into the afternoon, acquaintances can fulfil their obligations and meander off.

Because you have selected late morning for this occasion, part of the meal at least should have a breakfast theme. Offer as wide a variety as possible of croissants, brioche and fresh rolls with butter, honey and a range of jam or preserves. Hot sweet rolls or coffee cake make the selection something special. A choice of fresh fruit juice (with or without vodka!), tea, coffee or, for a special occasion, Buck's Fizz (champagne with orange juice) would be an excellent ice breaker. During the winter, mugs of soup, cups of hot punch or coffee laced with brandy warms in more ways than one.

The main part of the menu can be either hot or cold as you prefer. Scrambled eggs and/or kedgeree, devilled kidneys, hash browned potatoes, grilled chops, sausages and bacon rashers are some of the more traditional offerings which remain perennially popular. Cold ham with mustard and redcurrant sauces, smoked or marinated fish, raised pies or an assortment of sausages and cheeses are possibilities if you prefer a cold compilation.

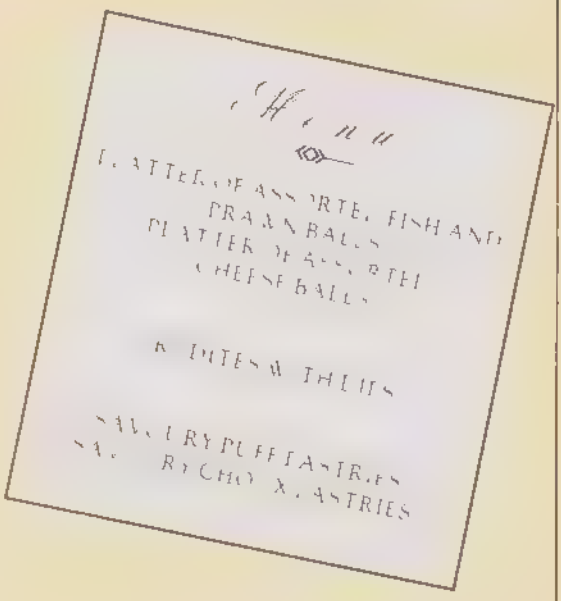
Desserts are not necessary for brunch, but a large bowl of fresh fruit rounds the meal beautifully. Melons or exotic fruit such as pineapple, mangoes, pawpaws or kiwi fruit can be mixed with oranges and grapefruit for added interest. Compotes of dried fruit, served either hot or cold, make a particularly tempting choice.

For a more unusual brunch, try having an ethnic orientation. Browse through your cookery books and choose a nationality to use as a theme. The Chinese are renowned for dim sum, small buns, dumplings and bite-sized savoury snacks. In India, curries of various strengths are eaten at all meals — offer a range of pakoras, pilau rice, naan, raita and meat, chicken or vegetable dishes. Mexicans roll tortillas around chicken and peppers, refried beans or spicy beef. Waffles, pancakes and muffins adorn American tables while the Russians enjoy blini with caviar and sour cream. Any number of interesting dishes can be created with eggs. Grilled fish, deep fried vegetables coated in batter, fritters and paper-thin pastries filled with cheese or vegetables are alternatives that offer great scope for a lively imagination. Time spent in research can result in an occasion that is both memorable and delicious.

CINZANO
CINZANO

Early Evening Buffet for Twenty

Food for an early evening buffet is meant to be a snack only, appetisers to accompany drinks and chat, not a full meal. Remember that your guests will be busy talking and drinking and while they will certainly enjoy food in passing they will soon be going home or on to dinner somewhere else. The party is not intended to last all evening. This means that although variety is important, quantities do not have to be enormous. Allow for approximately a dozen hors d'oeuvres per person and you ought to be on target. And as your guests will not be concentrating on their food, small tidbits that can be handled with fingers and napkins are ideal. Each item selected should provide no more than two or three bites. In that way they can be picked up from trays being passed by the host and hostess, or cooperative friends, making individual plates unnecessary. Although platters can be placed on tables for guests to help themselves, at this type of party people are more likely to take an occasional nibble than to fill a plate. Bowls of nuts, crisps and olives should be dotted around the room. Small dishes of sauce can also accompany the fish and prawn balls for further variety. Sweet and sour sauce, chutneys, pickles or fruit sauces are all delicious for dipping. Just be sure to provide plenty of toothpicks to spear them with and empty dishes for the debris!



A mixture of hot and cold hors d'oeuvres has been chosen for this menu, but the former is not essential. If you prefer not to be tied to the kitchen at the last minute, cold hors d'oeuvres only are more than acceptable. On the other hand, if a friend or neighbour is willing to help out and keep the hot tidbits circulating, all the better. You can always return the favour next time they have a party.

Prawn Balls

2 lb/1 kg prawns, shelled
20 water chestnuts
2 tbsp/30 ml onion
1 inch/5 cm fresh ginger root
2 eggs, beaten
4 tsp/20 ml cornflour
2 tbsp/30 ml Croft Particular sherry or Cinzano Dry
1 tsp/5 ml salt
oil for frying

Defrost the prawns if frozen. Mince with the water chestnuts, onion and ginger root. If you cannot get fresh ginger root, substitute a pinch of ground ginger. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Shape into small balls and fry in very hot oil until golden. Drain well.

Savoury Choux Pastries

double quantity choux pastry
4 oz. 125 g grated cheese
1 tsp/5 ml chilli powder (optional)
any one or two of the following:
4 tbsp 60 ml sweetcorn
4 tbsp 60 ml fried onion
4 tbsp 60 ml cooked mushrooms
4 tbsp 60 ml diced ham

Prepare the choux pastry as on page 152. While it is warm mix in the grated cheese, chilli powder and one or two of the other ingredients. Deep fry a few spoonsful at a time until puffed and golden. Alternatively, drop small spoonsful onto greased trays. Preheat the oven and bake for 10 - 15 minutes at 220C 425F/Gas 7 or until puffed and golden. Serve immediately.

GEFILLTE FISH BALLS

2 lb/1 kg white fish fillets, skinned
1 medium onion
2 eggs
4 tbsp/60 ml matzoh meal
salt and pepper
1 tbsp/15 ml fresh parsley, chopped
oil for frying

Mince the fish with the onion. Add the eggs and and matzoh meal to bind. If you cannot get matzoh meal, use flour or ground water biscuits. Season with salt, pepper and parsley. Shape into small balls and fry in very hot oil until golden. Drain well

For variety, tinned salmon or grated potato can be used instead of white fish. If using potato, two grated courgettes can be added to the mixture.

Cheese Balls

4 oz/125 g blue cheese, crumbled

4 fl oz/125 ml sour cream

2 tbsp/30 ml spring onions or chives, chopped

1 tbsp/15 ml celery, finely chopped

Mash the cheese with the sour cream to make a smooth paste. Add the remaining ingredients, form into small balls and chill. Alternatively, roll the cheese balls in the chopped celery rather than mixing it into the paste. For further variety, the cheese can be moulded around the outside of a seedless grape.

4 oz/125 g English cheese, grated

3 oz/75 g cream cheese

3 tbsp/45 ml Croft Original sherry or Cinzano Bianco

few drops Worcester sauce

2 tbsp/30 ml spring onions or chives, chopped

2 tbsp/30 ml celery, finely chopped

Mash the cheeses together to make a smooth paste. Season with sherry or Cinzano and Worcester sauce. Fold in the vegetables and form the mixture into small balls or shape the balls first and coat with the vegetables. Chill before serving.

4 oz/125 g Wensleydale or Feta cheese, crumbled

4 oz/125 g butter, softened

½ tsp/2½ ml paprika

2 tbsp/30 ml finely chopped herbs

Mash the cheese with the butter to make a smooth paste. Season with paprika and herbs. Form into small balls or shape the balls first and then coat with paprika or herbs. Chill before serving.

Any of the cheese balls can be rolled in crushed or chopped nuts, crumbled corned beef, tongue or ham or minced green and/or red pepper. A platter of assorted cheese balls with a variety of coatings makes both an attractive and delicious hors d'oeuvre.

CRUDITÉS WITH DIPS

Crudités with Dips

Arrange raw vegetables carrot, cucumber and celery sticks, button mushrooms, cauliflower florets, strips of pepper (red, green and/or yellow) on serving platters with small dishes of dip in the centre.

Onion Dip
8 fl oz/225 ml sour cream
3 tbsp/45 ml dried onion flakes
2 beef stock cubes, crumbled

Combine the ingredients and chill for 30 minutes before serving. If the flavour isn't strong enough, add an extra stock cube or more onions.

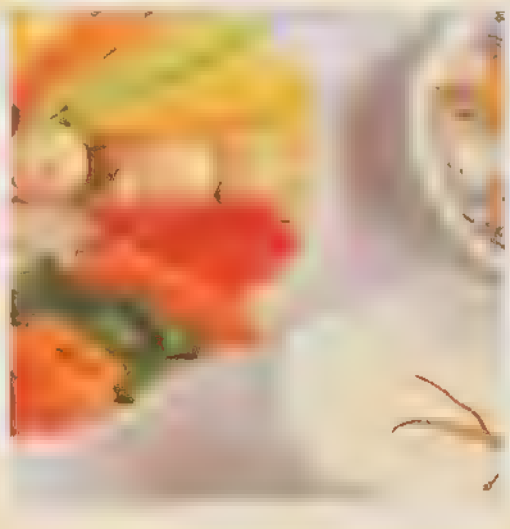
Anchovy Dip
6–8 anchovy fillets, drained
1 clove garlic, crushed
4 oz/125 g unsalted butter
8 oz/225 ml double cream

Mash the anchovies with the crushed garlic. Gently fry in the melted butter for 5 minutes, stirring constantly, to release the flavours.

Boil the cream until it thickens slightly. Stir in the anchovies and whisk until smooth and well blended. Serve hot or cold.

Devilled Tomato Dip
5 fl oz/150 ml stock, hot
5 fl oz/150 ml tomato sauce or ketchup
2 tsp/10 ml chilli powder or 2 dried chillis, crumbled
2 tsp/10 ml ground cumin seeds
2 tsp/10 ml ground coriander

Combine the stock and tomato sauce or ketchup. Stir in the remaining ingredients and mix well. Simmer gently for 5 minutes. Serve hot or cold.



SAVOURY PUFF PASTRIES

Defrost and roll out 1 lb 450 g puff pastry. Leave to rest for 10 minutes then cut into strips lengthways. Spread the centre of each strip with any of the following:

thick tomato sauce mixed with chopped black olives and sautéed onions

strips of mozzarella cheese

grated or crumbled cheese mixed with mustard

anchovy fillets

shredded cabbage sautéed with onion and dill seeds

cooked spinach mixed with Feta, ricotta or cottage cheese

thick white sauce (see page 150) flavoured with curry powder or made with white wine and mixed with cooked ham and/or chicken, sautéed mushrooms, diced asparagus spears, smoked haddock with sweetcorn or anything else that strikes your fancy

Brush one edge of the pastry strip with beaten egg. Fold over and press gently to seal. Bake for 10–15 minutes at 200C/400F/Gas 6 or until well risen and golden. Cut into fingers approximately 2 inches (5 cm) long and arrange on an attractive serving dish. Pass among your guests while the pastry is warm.

If you are using a mixture with white sauce, remember to make the sauce very thick so that it isn't too messy when served. Alternatively, drop small spoonsful onto greased trays. Preheat the oven and bake for 10–15 minutes at 220C/425F/Gas 7 or until puffed and golden. Serve immediately.

— Timetable —

1. Defrost the puff pastry if necessary.

2. Cook the fish and prawn balls. Leave to cool.

3. Mix the cheeses and shape into balls. Arrange on platters, cover and chill until 1 hour before needed.

4. Make the onion dip. Cover and chill until 30 minutes before needed.

5. Make the anchovy and tomato dips. Cool and cover until needed.

6. Clean and trim the vegetables. Cut to make crudités. Cover with clingfilm.

7. Prepare the choux pastry and add the flavourings. Leave to cool.

8. Prepare the filling for the puff pastry. Leave to cool.

9. Roll out, fill and cut the puff pastry.

10. Arrange the fish balls and crudités on platters. Reheat the dips. Spoon into small bowls and place in the centre of the platters of crudités so that guests can help themselves to both vegetables and dips.

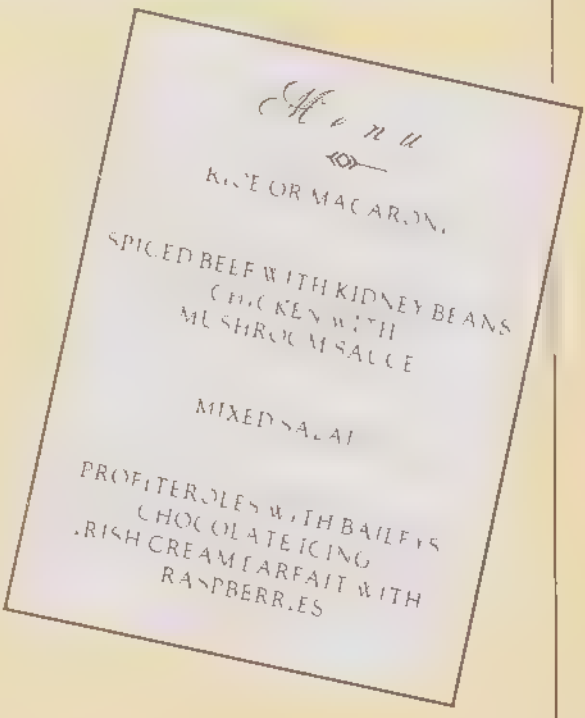
11. Bake the choux and puff pastries.

— Wine —

Large bottles or boxes of house wine are the best bet for an early evening party. Consumption may be high which means that the drinks should not be too potent. Chilled Cinzano (Bianco, Rosso, Rose or Dry), with or without soda, or a punch made with white wine, orange juice and sparkling water are possible alternatives. Don't forget to order a stock of soft drinks for those who prefer them.

Buffets and Informal Entertaining

Hot Buffet Supper —for Twelve



Every now and again an occasion arises where there are too many guests to fit comfortably around the dining room table, but not quite so many that you have to deal with a crush in every corner of the house. There will be just enough room for everyone to sit, albeit casually lounging on the hall stairs or sitting room floor, rather than standing all evening. Once food is served, your guests are likely to stay put for some time, chatting with whoever is nearby rather than mingling and circulating. With plates piled high, they are almost certain to relish whatever you choose to serve.

In this type of informal atmosphere, casseroles or sauces with rice or macaroni are ideal. They can be prepared early on the day and reheated once the evening gets started. The rice or macaroni can be put on to boil at the same time. Allow a generous quantity for each person, say 2–3 oz/50–75 g (uncooked) as this represents the most filling part of the supper. And be sure to offer a range of accompaniments suited to the dish you have selected. If, for example, you decide to make a curry, serve poppadoms, pickles, chutneys and yoghurt mixed with mint. If you make chilli, serve grated cheese, chopped onions and jalapeno peppers. Other delicious alternatives are meatballs, boiled gammon with a cider and raisin sauce, or beef stew flavoured with something out of the ordinary such as oranges or Guinness. Fish also makes a superb choice, either simmered in a tomato and wine sauce or fried in bite-sized strips and mixed with a sweet and sour sauce. For a vegetarian alternative, mix aubergines, courgettes, mushrooms and okra if it is readily available in a tomato sauce or leeks and chopped eggs in cheese sauce.

The contrast of crispy salad and warm sauce may come as a surprise, but it will surely be a pleasant one. Try to use an assortment of lettuces. If it is in season, include a small head of radicchio.

Spiced Beef with Kidney Beans

2 fl oz/50 ml olive oil
1 lb/450 g onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
3 lb/1½ kg stewing steak, cubed
1 red pepper, seeded and chopped
2 chillis, seeded and chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped
2 tbsp/30 ml tomato purée
2 tsp/10 ml salt
2 tsp/10 ml brown sugar
2 × 14 oz/400 g tins kidney beans

Heat the olive oil and soften all but one of the onions and the garlic. Drain and set aside. Brown the meat in the oil. Stir the onions and garlic back in.

Liquidise the remaining onion with the red pepper and chillis. Add to the beef along with the green pepper and tomato purée. Cover and cook on a very low light for 2 hours or until the meat is tender. Check occasionally to make sure the meat doesn't stick. It should produce a thick gravy from its own juices, but may need just a little bit of water. Season to taste with salt and sugar. Rinse the kidney beans with cold water and drain well. Add to the beef and cook for 30 minutes longer.

If you prefer to use dried kidney beans, follow the cooking instructions in the timetable (page 76).

Chicken with Mushroom Sauce

double quantity white sauce made with half milk and half chicken stock

1 lb/450 g mushrooms, quartered

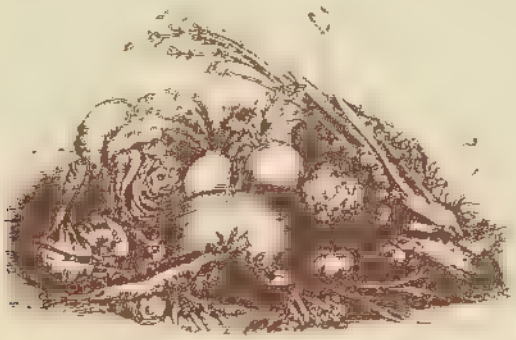
3 oz/75 g butter

3 lb/1½ kg chicken meat, cooked and diced

10 fl oz/300 ml double cream

Prepare the sauce according to the recipe on page 150. Soften the mushrooms in butter and add to the sauce along with the chicken. Season to taste and heat thoroughly. Stir in the cream and transfer to a covered serving dish.

There are any number of ways to vary this simple but elegant buffet dish. Sautéed leeks and/or courgettes can be added to the sauce as can peas, asparagus tips or sweetcorn. Grated cheese can be added to the sauce before the meat and vegetables or it can be flavoured with curry powder to taste. Turkey, flaked fish (fresh or smoked) or ham can be used instead of chicken. If you use fish, add just a few prawns for contrast. If you use ham, the sauce could be made with cider and stock and the vegetables replaced with raisins.



Profiteroles with Baileys Chocolate Icing

double quantity choux pastry
10 fl oz/300 ml double cream, lightly whipped
8 oz/225 g icing sugar
1 oz/25 g unsweetened cocoa
2 tbsp/30 ml Baileys Irish Cream
2 tbsp/30 ml water

Preheat the oven to 200C 400F Gas 6. Prepare the pastry as on page 152 and drop spoonsful onto a greased baking sheet. Bake the profiteroles for 30 minutes or until well risen and crisp. Make a horizontal slit in each bun to let the steam escape. Leave to cool

Just before serving, fill each profiterole with a spoonful of whipped cream. Sieve together the icing sugar and cocoa. Blend in the Baileys Irish Cream and water. Mix to a smooth, spreading consistency and use immediately to top each profiterole.

IRISH CREAM PARFAIT WITH RASPBERRIES

7 egg yolks

7 oz/200 g caster sugar

1 vanilla pod

10 fl oz/300 ml milk

6 tbsp/90 ml Baileys Irish Cream

10 fl oz/300 ml double or whipping cream

2 oz/50 g plain chocolate, chopped

Whisk together the egg yolks and sugar. Place the vanilla pod and milk in a saucepan and bring to the boiling point. Remove the vanilla pod and pour the milk onto the egg yolks, whisking constantly. Strain back into the saucepan and heat gently, stirring all the time, until thick enough to coat the back of the spoon. Cool, stirring occasionally, to prevent a skin forming. Blend in the Baileys Irish Cream and chill thoroughly.

Whisk the cream and fold into the egg mixture along with the chopped chocolate. Pour into a 2 pint/1 litre freezer proof mould. Freeze until firm. Turn out onto a serving dish and garnish with fresh raspberries or any other fruit you like—spiced peaches, cherries, melon and strawberries are all delicious.

— Timetable —

1. If you are using dried kidney beans, cover them with boiling water and cover the bowl. Leave to soak for 1 hour then drain, place in a large pan with an onion and a clove of garlic and cover with clean water. Cook for 1½ hours or until they are soft. If you have a pressure cooker, the beans need to cook for 20 minutes only. Add salt and cook for 5 minutes longer then drain and cool.

2. Mix the Irish Cream Parfait and freeze.

3. Prepare the beef and leave to simmer.

4. Poach the chicken and leave in its stock to cool.

5. Strain off the chicken stock. Prepare the white sauce and leave to cool.

6. Soften the mushrooms and cook any other vegetables you have decided to add to the chicken sauce.

7. Bake the profiteroles and leave to cool.

8. Prepare the salad and dressing but do not mix.

9. Cook the rice or macaroni.

10. Combine the beef and beans and reheat. Combine the chicken, mushrooms and sauce. Reheat.

11. Whisk the cream and fill the profiteroles. Make the icing and decorate each one.

12. Turn the parfait onto a serving dish and decorate with raspberries.

13. Dress the salad and toss.

— Wine —

As this is likely to be a long and leisurely party, open the festivities by offering your guests a glass of hot mulled wine or a wine and fruit punch. From there you can move onto a choice of a medium dry white or a full-bodied, hearty red. You may find that beer or shandy are equally popular.

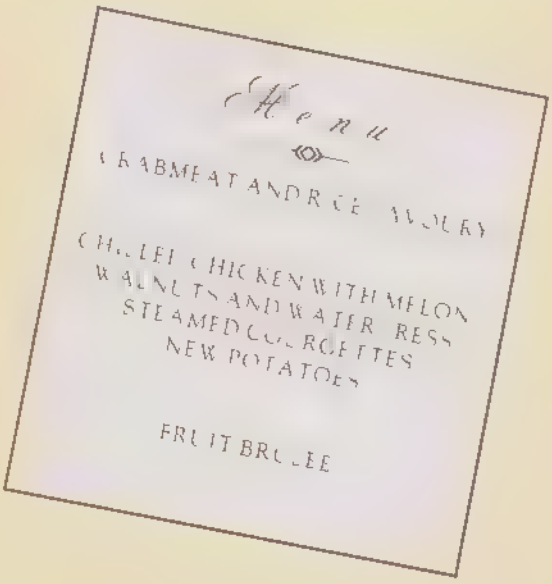
Outdoor Entertaining

DELICADO

Al Fresco Supper
- for Six -

Although this menu assumes that dinner will be served outdoors on an ideal summer evening, it can just as easily create an illusion of summer indoors. The seasonal ingredients can be enhanced by a lightly chilled white wine and a centrepiece of sweetpeas or other equally gay and colourful flowers. A pale yellow or crisp white tablecloth can be complemented by bright, cheerful napkins and a simple but elegant dinner service.

The food itself is uncomplicated and straightforward. Dinner begins with a hot dish, which can take the chill off the weather and, at the same time, break any ice between the guests. It is an ideal way to introduce new acquaintances to one another. The main course and dessert make the most of seasonal ingredients, using the first new potatoes and baby courgettes of the summer plus the freshest of fresh fruit in the brulée. If you are prepared to pay a premium, supermarkets now take little notice of seasons, however, and the same meal could be served all the year round. The beauty of the dinner lies in the freshness of the ingredients, though. If any of them are unavailable, something else should be substituted. Frozen or tinned ingredients will simply not achieve the same results.



The contrast of cold chicken, melon and crunchy walnuts with piping hot courgettes and potatoes allows for any sudden drop in temperature, as well as titillating the palate. The brulée, a creamy, rich dessert with an unexpected fruit base, rounds things off beautifully. By the time you retire to more comfortable chairs—whether indoor or out—for coffee and liqueurs or a drop of your best Hennessy cognac, the atmosphere should be well and truly summerlike.

Crabmeat and Rice Savoury

2 oz/50 g cooked rice
6 oz/175 g crabmeat, flaked
3 spring onions, chopped
1 clove garlic, crushed
2 tbsp/30 ml mayonnaise
2 oz/50 g Gruyère, grated
pinch cayenne pepper

Combine the rice, crabmeat, spring onions, garlic and mayonnaise. If you cannot get spring onions, substitute 2 tbsp/30 ml red or Spanish onion, chopped as finely as possible.

Spoon the mixture into buttered ramekins or individual ovenproof bowls. Sprinkle with cheese and cayenne pepper. Place the ramekins on a baking tray and cook under a very hot grill until the cheese has melted and is golden brown. Serve immediately.

Chilled Chicken with Melon, Walnuts and Watercress

1 medium melon
10 oz/300 g walnuts
2 lb/1 kg cooked chicken, diced
3 tbsp/45 ml mayonnaise
1 tsp/5 ml lemon juice
1 tsp/5 ml oil
salt and pepper
1 bunch watercress

Cut the melon in half and remove all the seeds. Scoop into small balls or peel and dice. Do this over a large bowl so that you can catch all the juice.

Crush the nuts saving a few to garnish the dish. Combine with the melon and chicken.

Stir the melon juice into the mayonnaise. Add the lemon juice, oil and salt and pepper to taste. Pour over the salad and toss well. Chill. Just before serving, arrange the watercress around the edge of a large dish and pile the chicken salad in the middle. Garnish with the reserved nuts.

Seedless grapes and mandarins can be used instead of melon; pecans or toasted almonds can be used instead of walnuts.

FRUIT BRULÉE

1½ lb/675 g soft fruit
8 oz/225 g caster sugar
20 fl oz/600 ml double cream
3 egg yolks, beaten
few drops vanilla essence
4 oz/125 g demerara sugar

Rinse the fruit and place in a heavy bottomed saucepan with half of the caster sugar. Cook over a low light for 5 minutes or until the juice begins to run. Transfer to a serving dish and leave until cold. Any combination of berries you like can be used—try a mixture of red and/or blackcurrants, raspberries and blackberries for instance. Sliced peaches, strawberries, stoned cherries, pineapple or a mixture of peeled oranges and grapefruit are also delicious and do not need to be cooked. Simply place in the bottom of a dish, sprinkle with liqueur (Cointreau, Kirsch or Cassis) and leave to macerate for an hour or two.

Whisk one-quarter of the cream with the egg yolks and remaining caster sugar until very light. Heat the remaining cream with the vanilla. Just as the cream is about to boil, pour slowly over the eggs, stirring constantly. Return to the pan and simmer gently, stirring, until the custard thickens. Do not let it boil. Cool thoroughly then pour over the fruit. Refrigerate until the custard has set.

Sprinkle the demerara sugar over the custard. Cook under a very hot grill until the sugar is brown and bubbling. Cool and refrigerate again so that the sugar caramelises and hardens.

— Timetable —

1. Cook the fruit for the brulée if necessary. Transfer to a serving dish and leave to cool.

2. Prepare the custard and pour over the fruit. Leave to cool.

3. Roast or poach the chicken and leave to cool.

4. Cook the rice for the crabmeat savoury and leave to cool.

5. Wash the potatoes. Wash and trim the courgettes.

6. Prepare the chicken salad and dressing. Mix well and chill until 1 hour before ready to serve

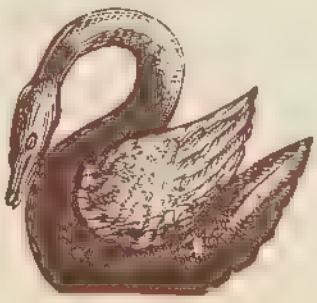
7. Glaze the fruit brulée, cool and chill until 30 minutes before ready to serve

8. Prepare the crabmeat savouries and bake.

9. Cook the potatoes and courgettes. Transfer the chicken salad to a serving dish and garnish.

— Wine —

Light and smooth should describe the wine for a summer evening's supper out of doors. Portuguese, Italian, French or Californian would all be suitable. Try Vinho Verde, Frascati or Muscadet for example if you want white; Dao, Bardolino or Beaujolais if you prefer red.

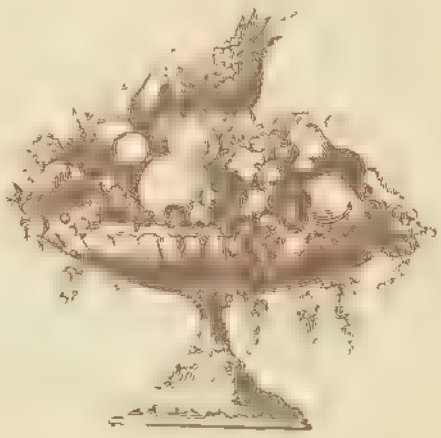


Salads All Year Round

Creating a salad is one of the most satisfying culinary arts. There are now so many fresh vegetables available in all seasons, that it is no longer exclusively a summer dish. For a start, the range of lettuces in the shops is enormous. In addition to the traditional English lettuce and cos, there are iceberg lettuces all through the year, lamb's lettuce or mache, curly endive or frisee, radicchio and several other red-leaved varieties. A mixture of leaves makes an attractive and delicious salad.

There are also numerous vegetables which can be added to lettuce or used in compositions of their own. Chinese leaves, red and white cabbage, young spinach, chicory and fennel can be found with ease. Sprouting seeds are now widely available and add a new dimension to salads. Celeriac and carrots can be grated and blanched. Tiny new potatoes or turnips cooked until they are just tender, make an interesting contrast. Fresh herbs provide additional flavour.

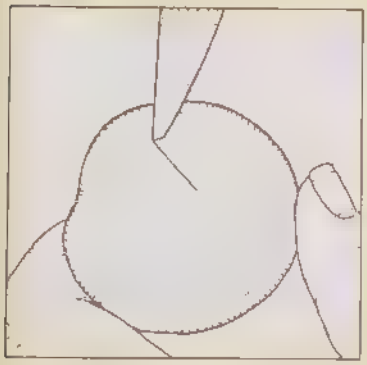
Nor are there many other ingredients that do not go well with salad. Try crumbling feta cheese over the vegetables, or adding slices of mozzarella or Emmenta. Warm sauteed chicken livers or thinly sliced duck breast are a treat. Slivers of cooked meat, ham or poultry can be added as can crispy bacon pieces, croutons and nuts. Delicatessens offer a range of artichoke hearts, hearts of palm, olives and countless other delicacies which, added in small quantities, give a salad a life of its own. Similarly, dressings can be made more interesting by varying the oils and vinegars used. A small amount of hazelnut or walnut oil mixed with vegetable or olive oil gives an aroma and flavour beyond compare. Fruit, herb or sherry vinegar can be added sparingly and to great effect.

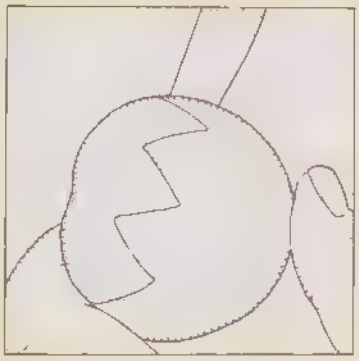


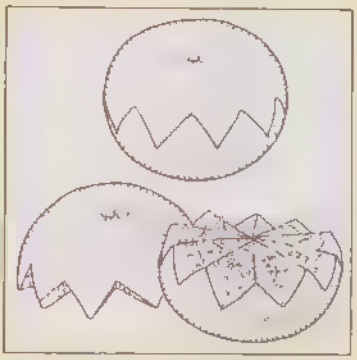
— Garnishes —

Zig-zag tomatoes

Using firm tomatoes and a very sharp knife, make v-shaped cuts all around the tomato. Carefully pull the halves apart, twisting slightly as you separate them.

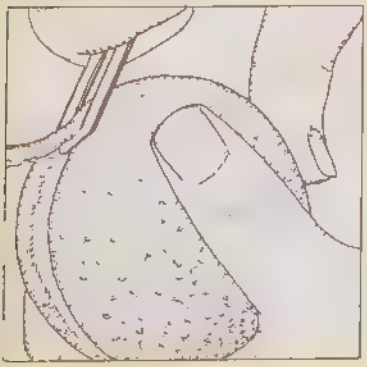


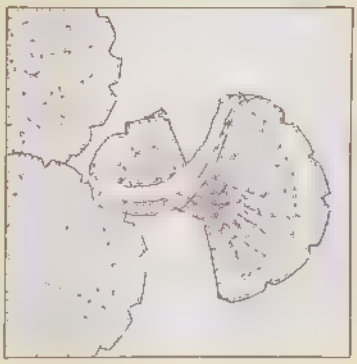




Butterflies

Lemons, oranges, cucumbers and tomatoes can be twisted to make decorative butterflies. Cut into thin slices and cut towards the centre but not completely through. Gently twist the two halves in opposite directions. Alternatively, cut two v-shaped sections out of each slice, with the point of the v's nearly touching. Remove carefully. Before slicing the fruit or vegetables, thin slices of peel can be removed to make a ridged effect in the skin. Save the pieces you cut away to grate or sprinkle on top of the finished dish.





Outdoor Entertaining

Salad Picnic for —Ten—

Wherever you live, it is never difficult to find a place for a picnic within an hour or so's drive from home, and what better way to spend a summer afternoon with friends than sitting in a park or a field or next to the river? If you can manage to borrow or hire a boat, all the better. Escapist though it may be, getting away from the everyday environment and spending time out of doors with friends is an ideal way to relax.

None of the dishes selected for this menu is complicated to prepare and all of them travel well. Spicy tomato juice can be mixed on the spot. Just bring bottles or tins and add Tabasco or Worcestershire sauce to taste. Nor would the quiet splash of Smirnoff vodka go amiss. The tuna, macaroni and vegetable medley, cherry tomatoes and bean salad can be chilled at home so that by the time you are ready to eat, they will have reached just the right temperature. Only on the hottest day could they spoil, and then only if kept outdoors for a very long period. An insulated bag filled with ice packs offers extra insurance. For dessert, the peanut butter and chocolate slice is perfect. It is frozen overnight and defrosts while you are travelling and eating so that it is ready to eat when you are.

Packing food for transporting is not difficult. If you can protect them well, use china or pottery. Otherwise plastic boxes and bowls can be pressed into service. Pack the stuffed tomatoes closely together in a single layer and cover firmly with clingfilm to avoid damage. Dishes to eat from can be china, plastic or paper depending on the strength of your picnic bag.

It is most important to remember on a picnic that anything you forget to bring must remain forgotten. If you are taking wine, do not leave the corkscrew behind. If the juice is tinned, don't forget the opener. Salt, pepper, forks, a knife for slicing the dessert, serving spoons, paper napkins and moist tissues for cleaning up afterwards are essential.

TUNA, MACARONI AND VEGETABLE MEDLEY

2 lb/1 kg macaroni

2 × 7 oz/200 g tins tuna fish

20 black olives, stoned

2 tsp/10 ml fresh parsley, chopped

2 tsp/10 ml fresh marjoram, chopped (optional)

4 tbsp/60 ml white wine vinegar

8 oz/225 g cauliflower

8 oz/225 g broccoli

8 oz/225 g courgettes

1 lb/450 g tomatoes

4 fl oz/125 ml olive oil

1 clove garlic, chopped

Cook the macaroni in boiling salted water until it is just tender. Drain once, rinse in cold water and drain again. Turn into a large mixing bowl. You can use very small macaroni for this salad or larger shapes, for instance butterflies. Mixed red, green and white macaroni also looks attractive if you can find it easily.

Add the flaked tuna, chopped olives and herbs to the macaroni. Sprinkle with vinegar and toss well.

Cut the cauliflower and broccoli into small florets. Dice the courgettes. Blanch the vegetables in boiling salted water for 3 minutes. They should still be crisp. Drain once, rinse in cold water and drain again. Add to the macaroni and toss well.

Plunge the tomatoes into boiling water for 1 minute then remove and peel. Cut in half and remove the seeds. Chop. Heat the olive oil and soften the garlic but do not let it brown. Add the tomatoes and heat through for 3–4 minutes. Pour over the macaroni and toss gently to blend the flavours. Adjust the seasoning, cool and turn into a large serving dish.

Stuffed Cherry Tomatoes

20 cherry tomatoes
4 hardboiled eggs, chopped
2 tbsp/30 ml spring onions, minced
1 carrot, finely grated
2 tbsp/30 ml mayonnaise
pinch salt

Cut a slice off the top of each tomato and carefully hollow out with a teaspoon. Combine all the filling ingredients and place a spoonful in each tomato. Arrange in a shallow serving dish and cover carefully with clingfilm.

Alternative fillings could be breadcrumbs sautéed with chopped mushrooms and herbs, smoked fish pâté or cottage cheese mixed with sweetcorn, chives, diced radishes or pineapple.

Mixed Bean Salad

4 lb/2 kg cooked beans – any combination of red or white kidney beans, green flageolet beans, borlotti beans or chick peas

1 small red pepper, seeded and chopped

1 small green pepper, seeded and chopped

6 spring onions, chopped

3 tbsp/45 ml lemon juice

6 tbsp/75 ml olive or walnut oil

salt and black pepper

If you are using tinned beans, rinse well with cold water and shake off as much water as possible. If you are using dried beans, follow the cooking instructions in the timetable (page 92).

Combine the beans, peppers and spring onions. Whisk the lemon juice and oil together. Pour over the beans and toss gently. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Peanut Butter and Chocolate Slice

12 oz/350 g plain chocolate
8 oz/225 g icing sugar, sieved
8 oz/225 g crunchy peanut butter
2 tbsp/30 ml unsalted butter
pinch salt
4 tsp/20 ml instant coffee granules
4 fl oz/125 ml boiling water
2 eggs, beaten
2 tsp/10 ml vanilla essence
1¼lb/600 g biscuit crumbs

Melt the chocolate in the top of a double boiler. Mix with the icing sugar, peanut butter, butter and salt.

Dissolve the coffee granules in boiling water. Add to the chocolate with all the other ingredients. Mix well so that the crumbs are well coated

Line a 2 lb 1 kg loaf pan with tin foil Spoon the chocolate mixture into the pan and smooth the surface. Cover with foil. Freeze overnight.

Timetable

1. Mix the peanut butter and chocolate slice. Freeze.

2 If you are using dried beans for the salad, place each kind in its own bowl cover with boiling water, cover the dish and leave to soak for 1 hour Drain well and transfer to heavy bottomed pans Cover with cold water and cook until tender, approximately 1 hour. If you have a pressure cooker the beans will only need 20 minutes to cook Add salt to taste, cook for 5 minutes longer then drain well and cool Mix with all the other ingredients, dress and chill.

3 Cook the macaroni and vegetables for the tuna medley Drain well and assemble the salad. Dress, cool and chill.

4 Boil the eggs and mix with the other ingredients for the tomato filling Chill the eggs and tomatoes separately Stuff the tomatoes shortly before you are ready to pack them.

Wine

Again, a light fruity wine would be most suitable, possibly a rose on this occasion Anything too heavy on what will hopefully be an idyllic warm summer's day will simply put everyone to sleep Try Frascati or a hock for those who like white wine otherwise a Lambrusco or an Anjou red.

— Spiced Nuts —

Dip shelled fresh nuts in lightly beaten egg white or melted butter. Drain and toss with a mixture of salt, sugar, cinnamon and mixed spice or curry powder. You can also make a combination of nutmeg, cloves, ginger and allspice to taste. Alternatively, substitute chilli powder, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce or cayenne pepper for curry powder. Celery salt, garlic powder and cumin or coriander powder are another interesting combination.

Shake off any excess spices, place the nuts on a baking tray and bake for 45 minutes at 130C/250F/Gas ½.

— Salted Nuts —

Stir fry nuts in smoking hot butter for 4–5 minutes or until golden. Drain on paper towels and sprinkle with salt. Toss gently to coat and store in airtight tins. The fresher the nuts are when you serve them, the better.

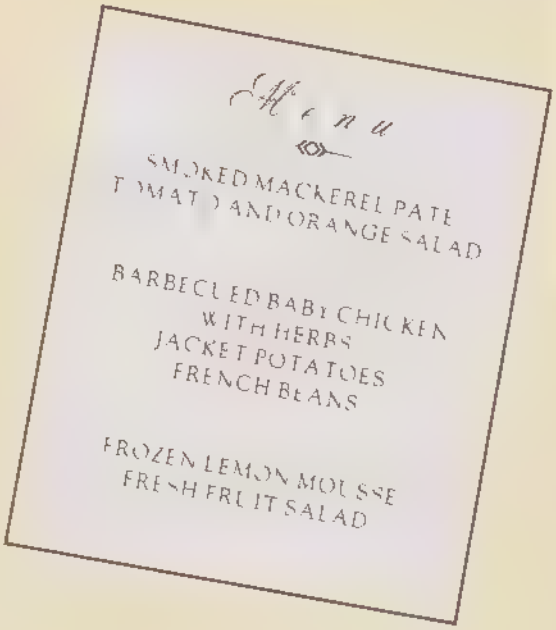
For extra zest, sprinkle the nuts with a pinch of cayenne pepper, curry powder or garlic powder.

Outdoor Entertaining

Barbecue for Eight

Wonderful as they are, there is always a risk when planning a barbecue that the weather will not cooperate. This menu has been selected with that thought in mind, combining pâté and salad, vegetables and desserts prepared in the kitchen with chicken and potatoes to be cooked outdoors. If the worst comes to the worst, even they can be transferred inside to the oven. But if at all possible, light that charcoal, add a few hickory chips or sprigs of fresh herbs and relax with a drink while savouring the aroma of food cooking over an open fire.

Almost any meat, poultry or fish can be cooked on a barbecue. There are countless variations on the perenially popular hamburger, made more exciting by using sauces to baste them, herbs or spices to flavour them and assorted accompaniments to garnish them. Spare ribs, steaks, chops and chicken pieces all taste better cooked over charcoal. There is nothing to compare with fresh sardines or trout straight from the grill. Kebabs from fish, shellfish, vegetables and fruit are delicious. Even a roast has a totally different flavour when it is cooked outdoors. A jacket potato rubbed with salt, wrapped in foil and cooked in the embers bears no resemblance at all to one emerging from the oven.



Barbecues are perfect for entertaining. Everyone congregates around the chef, watching his (or her) activities and enjoying the atmosphere. There is no doubt that the party will be lively; little risk that the conversation will flag. Strangers become friends more easily in such an informal environment. If everyone knows each other already, so much the better. Barbecues are great for banter and joking. By the time you move to the table and serve the food everyone has "helped" to prepare, the evening will be well under way.

Smoked Mackerel Pâté

- 12 oz/350 g smoked mackerel, skinned and boned
- 6 oz/175 g butter, melted
- 4 fl oz/125 ml double cream
- 3 tbsp/45 ml lemon juice
- salt and pepper
- pinch cayenne pepper or paprika

Blend all the ingredients in a food processor or liquidiser until smooth. Spoon into a 1 lb/450 g loaf pan or an attractive serving dish and sprinkle with cayenne pepper or paprika. Chill for at least 1 hour before serving in slices or scoops shaped with a pair of serving spoons.

A lighter mackerel pâté can be made by mixing the flaked fish with equal quantities of cottage cheese and sour cream. Season with lemon juice and cayenne.

Tomato and Orange Salad

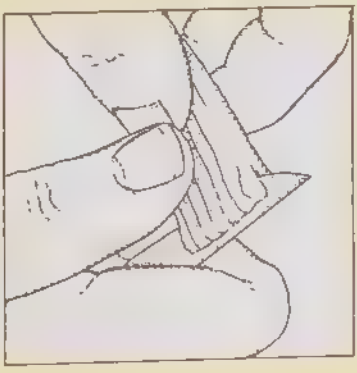
- 8 tomatoes, sliced
- 4 oranges, peeled and sliced
- 2 heads chicory OR
- 1 bunch mustard and cress
- vinaigrette dressing (see page 154)

Alternate slices of tomato and orange on each person's plate. Sprinkle with a few slices of chicory or some mustard and cress. Carefully pour over 1 tsp/5 ml vinaigrette. Place the pâté alongside the salad.

— Garnishes —

Radish roses
Make 6–8 slices from the base of the radish towards the stalk. Do not cut all the way through. Immerse the radishes in a bowl of iced water until they open out.
Alternatively, make cuts along the length of the radish to make a fan shape. Again, do not cut completely through. Immerse in iced water to open out.

Celery fans
Cut washed celery stalks into 2 inch (5 cm) lengths. Slice at narrow intervals along the length, leaving a solid base. Alternatively, slice at narrow intervals from both ends, leaving an uncut section in the middle. Make a cut through the slices at both top and bottom of each stalk. Immerse in iced water to open out.



Barbecued Baby Chicken with Herbs

8 × 1 lb/450 g baby chickens OR
4 × 3 lb/1½ kg chickens
8 fl oz/225 ml olive oil
4 tbsp/60 ml rosemary
4 dried chillis (optional)

Clean the chickens and split in half if you are using whole baby chickens. Flatten but do not cut all the way through. If you are using larger chickens, cut each one completely in half. Brush top and bottom with olive oil and sprinkle with herbs and crumbled chillis. Grill skin side up for 20 minutes then turn and cook for a further 20 minutes. The skin should be brown and crisp and the juices run clear when a skewer is inserted in the leg. Depending on the heat of your barbecue, the chicken may need to cook for a few minutes longer.

Any herbs you prefer can be used instead of rosemary—try oregano, basil, marjoram or parsley. If at all possible use fresh herbs, but if these are unavailable use dried and cut the quantity in half.

Frozen Lemon Mousse

4 eggs, separated
4 oz/125 g sugar
2 lemons
20 fl oz/600 ml double cream
6 oz/175 g biscuit crumbs

Whisk the egg yolks with the sugar until thick and foamy. The mixture should be very pale in colour. Add the finely grated rind and juice of the lemons, whisking constantly. Whisk the cream until it is firm enough to hold its shape. Stir into the eggs.

Beat the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Gently fold two spoonsful into the yolk mixture then gradually add the remainder.

Scatter half of the biscuit crumbs over the base of a greased 2 lb/1 kg loaf pan. Pour in the mousse and smooth the surface. Scatter the remaining crumbs over the top. Cover with tin foil and freeze overnight. Remove from the freezer and turn onto a serving dish 30 minutes before serving. The mousse will still be solid and leftovers can safely be returned to the freezer.

FRESH FRUIT SALAD

1 lb/450 g sugar
20 fl oz/600 ml water
2 apples, seeded and sliced
2 oranges, peeled and sliced
1 small melon, diced
8 oz/225 g grapes
2 bananas, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp/60 ml Cointreau or Kirsch (optional)

Dissolve the sugar in the water over a medium heat. Raise the temperature and boil the syrup for 1 minute.

Combine all the fruit in a large bowl. Pour over the syrup and add the liqueur if you are using it. Leave to cool then chill for 1 hour before serving. The fruit salad can be kept in the refrigerator overnight.

Fruit salad can be made with any fruit you like, so long as it is fresh and in good condition.

— Timetable —

1. Prepare the mackerel pâte and chill until one hour before serving.

2. Prepare the lemon mousse and freeze. Transfer to a serving dish and place in the refrigerator 30 minutes before serving.

3. Prepare the syrup for the fruit salad. Cut all the fruit, pour over the syrup, cool and chill until 30 minutes before serving.

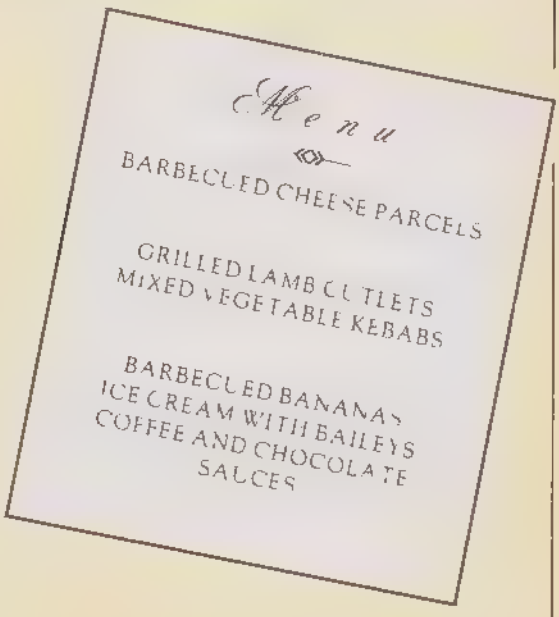
4. Prepare the chicken. Wash the potatoes and wrap in foil. Wash and trim the beans. If mange-tout are easily available they can be substituted for French beans.

5. Slice the tomatoes and oranges. Mix the dressing, pour over the salad and toss very gently. Refrigerate until 30 minutes before serving.

— Wine —

A medium dry, fruity white wine such as Liebfraumilch or Muscadet would complement both the pâté and chicken beautifully.

Barbecue for — Twenty —



Unless you have several barbecues, it is unlikely that everyone will sit down around the table together to eat when catering for twenty. Rather than cooking all of the cheese parcels, therefore, followed by all of the lamb cutlets and then all of the vegetable kebabs, it would be preferable to cook a few of each at a time and let your guests eat in shifts. When everyone has had their main course, dessert for everyone can be served at once.

This rota system lends itself to a leisurely meal, with guests hovering around the chef, nibbling as food comes off the grill. It is particularly informal and can be made even more pleasant, not to say hilarious, if etiquette is discarded completely and everyone digs in to eat as our early ancestors did. Cheese parcels consist of chunks of mozzarella, brie or camembert wrapped in foil and cooked until melted and stringy. The only way to eat the cheese is with a spoon or a piece of French bread or pitta to scoop it into the mouth. Lamb cutlets should be held by their bone and vegetable kebabs made on disposable skewers. Whole ears of corn, wrapped in foil or left in their husks, can also be cooked on the grill or among the coals. So long as you have plenty of bags or buckets around for the debris, the casual approach to eating is one that nearly everyone enjoys. Only when the bananas and ice cream are served do dishes and spoons become necessary. The bananas are cooked until their skins are black. The fruit will be hot and soft. Each person peels their own banana and helps themself to ice cream and sauce.

It will almost certainly be dark by this time. Jars containing candles can be lit so that you can see to toast marshmallows on sticks over the dying embers. If it is warm enough, coffee can be served outdoors while you watch for shooting stars or the latest satellite. Now is the time for music or ghost stories, reminiscences or tall tales to round off what is bound to be a superb evening for all.

GRILLED LAMB CUTLETS

40 lamb cutlets
10 fl oz/300 ml olive oil
2 lemons
4 onions
4 bay leaves
4 tsp/20 ml oregano or basil
salt and black pepper

Place the cutlets in shallow roasting pans or serving dishes. Try not to have more than two layers in each pan. Combine the remaining ingredients in a food processor or liquidiser until you have a coarse purée. Pour over the cutlets and leave to marinate overnight. Turn occasionally.

Remove the meat from the marinade and grill on the barbecue for 5 minutes on each side.

For variety, chicken legs and/or pork cutlets can be marinated and grilled in the same way but will need a slightly longer cooking time.

Mixed Vegetable Kebabs

20 mushrooms

20 courgettes

10 onions, quartered

10 peppers, green and/or red

20 tomatoes, halved

2 fl oz/50 ml olive oil

Wash the mushrooms and trim the stems to the level of the caps. Wash the courgettes and cut into quarters horizontally. Halve and seed the peppers. Cut each half into quarters.

Place the vegetables on skewers, alternating them to make an attractive pattern. Grill until tender, basting with oil and turning frequently. If you have some fresh herbs available, sprinkle them over the kebabs for extra flavour.

If you do not have skewers, mushrooms, tomato halves and courgette halves can still be grilled with excellent results. Aubergines can be sliced lengthways and barbecued at the same time. They should be sprinkled with salt and left to drain for 30 minutes before cooking, though, to remove some of their bitterness.

Baileys Coffee Sauce

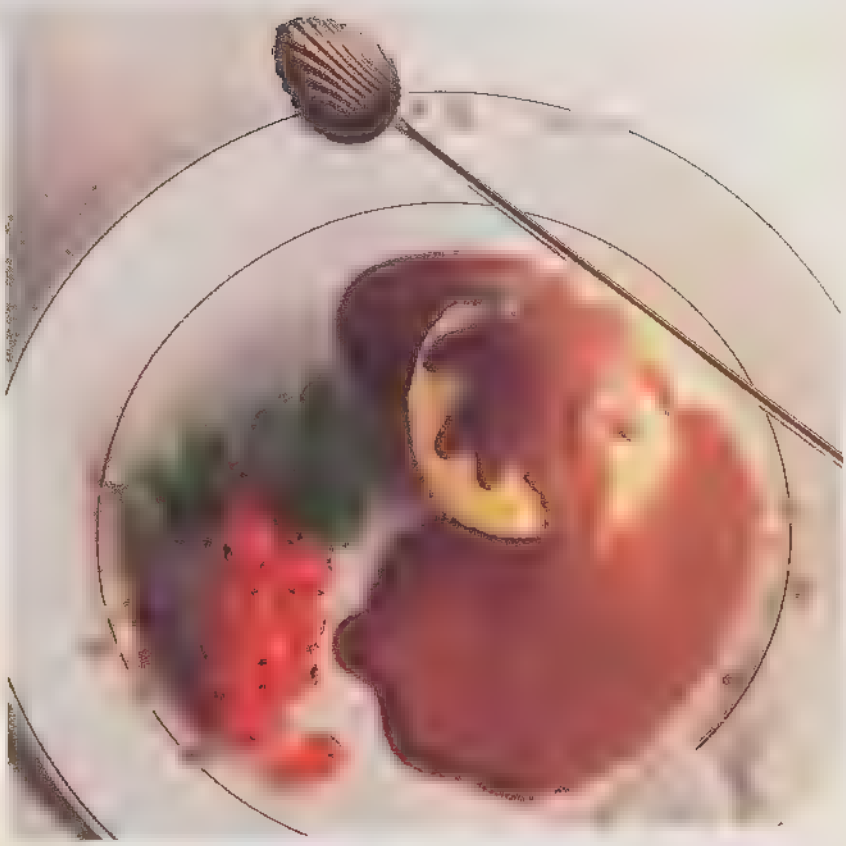
8 oz/225 g demerara sugar
4 tbsp/60 ml water
20 fl oz/600 ml black coffee
2 fl oz/50 ml Baileys Irish Cream

Stir the sugar in the water over a medium heat until it has dissolved. Increase the temperature and boil the syrup until it is a pale golden colour. Add the coffee and continue boiling until the sauce thickens slightly and turns syrupy. Remove from the heat and stir in Baileys Irish Cream. Serve hot.

Baileys Chocolate Sauce

3 tbsp/45 ml cornflour
15 fl oz/450 ml water
2 tbsp/30 ml caster sugar
12 oz/350 g plain chocolate
15 fl oz/450 ml double cream
2 tbsp/30 ml Baileys Irish Cream

Blend the cornflour to a smooth paste with a little bit of water. Add the remaining water. Stir over a medium heat until boiling. Simmer gently for 2 minutes then add the sugar. Mix well. Break the chocolate into pieces and add to the sauce. Continue stirring over a low heat until the chocolate has melted. Add the cream and Baileys. Heat gently, without boiling, for a further 2 minutes. Serve hot.



Timetable

1. Marinate the lamb cutlets.

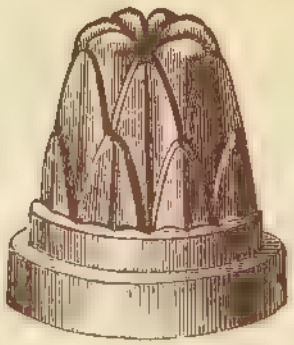
2. Prepare the sauces for the ice cream. Reheat later when the bananas are cooking.

3 Prepare the vegetables and assemble the kebabs. Cover with clingfilm until you are ready to begin cooking.

4. Wrap pieces of cheese in foil.

Wine

Beg, borrow or steal several enormous bowls or pans and set your barbecue off on the right foot with a batch of Sangria. Fairly inexpensive red wine is mixed with soda, lots of fruit, mint leaves and a splash of brandy to make a delicious and refreshing long drink. Alternatively, make a punch from white wine and orange juice plus sparkling water or soda. Both drinks should be well iced. Have cider, beer and lemonade for shandy on offer for those who prefer it.



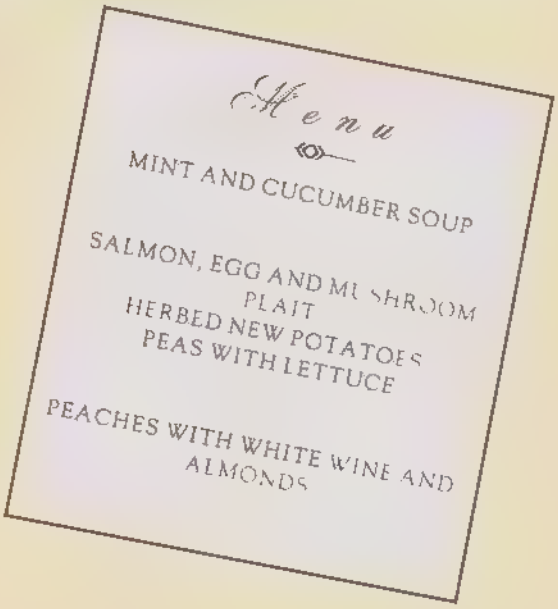
Entertaining on a Grand Scale

—Sitdown Wedding— Breakfast for Fifty

Catering for a wedding presents a number of dilemmas. The food must look and taste wonderful for a genuinely memorable occasion, but it should not break the bank or overtax your abilities. How can you feed a large number of people lavishly without overextending yourself in every way? One solution is to use readily available ingredients in a new or unusual way. Another is to use small quantities of more exotic or expensive ingredients to dress up basic dishes and create an illusion of luxury. Garnishing each bowl of soup with one or two prawns gives it that special touch but means that you do not have to buy vast quantities. Using fresh salmon in a pie rather than on its own means that the fish will go further.

If you are catering a wedding for someone in your own family, you will obviously want to mingle with guests rather than spend the day in the kitchen. Organisation and advance planning are crucial if this is not going to present a problem. As much of the cooking as possible should be done early in the morning or the day before the wedding.

Location and equipment are other matters which must be considered as soon as a date has been set. If you are erecting a marquee in the garden you must think about the distance from kitchen to eating area. The weather must also be considered. Will the food have to be carried outdoors? Does the marquee need heating and/or lighting? It may be advisable to hire a local hall but these frequently have limited kitchen facilities. You will need to think about the logistics of cooking at home, transporting food to the hall and reheating on the spot. Is there enough space to serve the food and pile up the used dishes while you proceed to the next course? Tables, chairs, crockery and cutlery, linen and flowers will almost certainly have to be hired. You may want to book musicians. A wedding cake must be ordered.



Mint and Cucumber Soup

10 medium onions, finely chopped
10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 lb/450 g unsalted butter
1 lb/450 g cucumber, peeled and diced
1 lb/450 g plain flour
8 pints/4 litres chicken stock
4 pints/2 litres single cream
4 pints/2 litres natural yoghurt
8 oz/225 g fresh mint, finely chopped
salt and pepper

Soften the onion and garlic in melted butter. Add the cucumber, stir well to coat, cover and cook gently for 20 minutes. Add the flour and mix well. Slowly add the stock and cook, stirring constantly, until the soup thickens. Simmer for 10 minutes.

Cool the soup for 1 hour then liquidise. You will have to do this in batches. Turn each quantity of puréed soup into a large mixing bowl. Stir in the cream, yoghurt and mint. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Chill thoroughly. Serve garnished with thin slices of cucumber, mint leaves and a few prawns if they are easily obtainable.

SALMON, EGG AND MUSHROOM PLAIT

1 lb/450 g rice

6 onions, finely chopped

3 lb/1½ kg mushrooms, chopped

12 oz/350 g butter, melted

8 fl oz/225 ml white wine

3 tbsp/45 ml fresh parsley, finely chopped

salt and pepper

6 lb/3 kg puff pastry, defrosted

18 hardboiled eggs, peeled and chopped

6 lb/3 kg cooked salmon, flaked

3 eggs, beaten

Cook the rice and leave to cool.

Soften the onions and mushrooms in butter. Add the wine and parsley. Mix well. Simmer gently for 10–15 minutes or until most of the liquid has evaporated. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Leave to cool.

Roll each piece of pastry into a large rectangle and leave to rest. Trim the edges, saving the extra pastry.

To assemble the pies, spread the salmon in a wide column down the centre of each piece of pastry. Cover with a layer of chopped eggs, mushrooms, onions and rice.

Brush the edges of the pastry with beaten egg. Make diagonal cuts in the pastry at ¼ inch (¾ cm) intervals. Fold the strips into the centre alternately to give a plaited effect. Carefully lift onto greased baking trays. Brush with beaten egg.

Preheat the oven to 210C/425F/Gas 7. Bake for 30–40 minutes or until the pastry is well risen and golden brown. If you are baking all the pies at the same time, using all available space in your oven, rotate the pans once or twice to ensure that they cook and brown evenly. The pies can be served hot or cold. If serving hot, leave to rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Do not keep the pies overnight if serving cold or the pastry will get soggy.

HERBED NEW POTATOES

100 new potatoes
4 oz/125 g spring onions, chopped
1½ lb/675 g butter, melted
6 oz/175 g fresh parsley
4 oz/125 g fresh basil, oregano or marjoram

Scrub and boil the potatoes until tender. Drain, cool slightly and peel.

Soften the spring onions in butter. Add the potatoes and finely chopped herbs. Stir well so that the potatoes are completely coated in butter and herbs. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Any herbs you like can be substituted, but be sure they are fresh. If you cannot get fresh herbs, simply coat the potatoes in butter and spring onions.

PEAS WITH LETTUCE

2 heads lettuce
12 lb/6 kg peas
12 oz/350 g butter
2 tbsp/30 ml salt
2 tbsp/30 ml caster sugar
6 oz/175 g mint

Wash the lettuce and tear the leaves into small pieces. Use a lettuce with soft rather than crisp leaves. Place in a large pan with the peas and all the other ingredients. Place the mint on top. Cover the pan, bring to the boil and simmer gently for 20–25 minutes if you are using fresh peas, or 10 minutes if you are using frozen peas. Remove the mint before serving.

Peaches with White Wine and Almonds

50 peaches, halved and stoned

3 lb/1½ kg macaroon crumbs

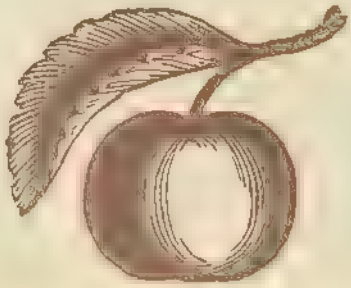
1½ lb/675 g cherries, stoned

20 fl oz/600 ml sweet white wine

Scoop some of the pulp out of the peach halves, leaving just enough to keep the shell firm. Finely chop the pulp and mix with the crumbs and diced cherries. You can use fresh, tinned, maraschino or glace cherries.

Arrange the peach halves in shallow, buttered ovenproof dishes. Fill each half with the crumb mixture. Pour the wine over the peaches.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the peaches for 20–30 minutes or until tender. Serve hot or cold, allowing two halves per person. The peaches are delicious on their own, but can be accompanied by fresh cream or a scoop of ice cream if you prefer.



— Timetable —

1 Poach the salmon, cook the rice, eggs, mushrooms and onions for the pie. Leave everything to cool. Defrost the pastry if necessary.

2 Make the soup and chill until 30 minutes before you are ready to serve.

3. Clean the potatoes. Chop the herbs.

4. Prepare the peas.

5. Prepare the peaches.

6. Assemble and bake the salmon plaits.

7 Cook the potatoes While they are heating with the herbs, cook the peas

8. Bake the peaches while the main course is being served.

— Wine —

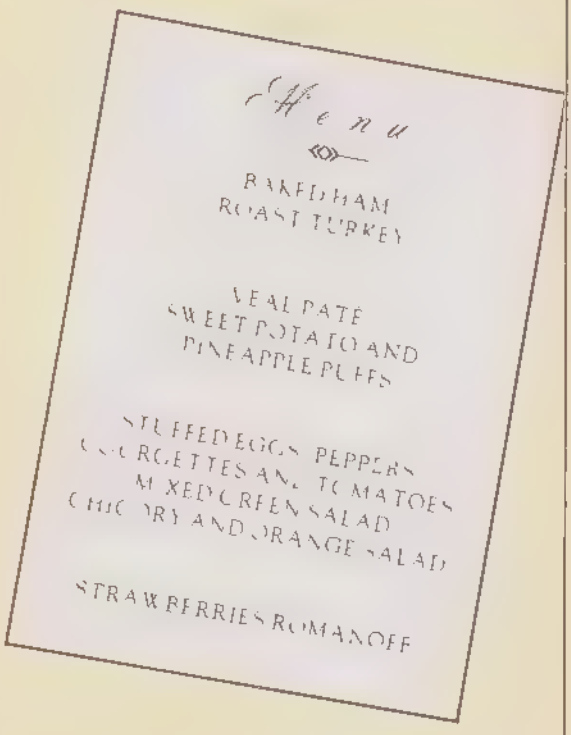
For a special occasion, a special wine. Chablis, Gewurtztraminer or a sparkling white, medium to dry, would be perfect, for instance Piat Brut or Demi-Sec.

— A Winter Alternative

Leek and potato soup with a swirl of cream is a simple, delicious and warming first course for a winter wedding breakfast Follow with roast veal stuffed with breadcrumbs, sultanas and orange rind. Baste and glaze with a mixture of orange juice and white wine. Serve the veal with roast potatoes and curly kale or broccoli. For dessert, continue the orange theme with a moulded semolina pudding Cook the semolina with white wine and orange juice Sweeten to taste then add egg yolks and whisked egg whites. Pour into several wet moulds, fluted if possible, and chill until firm Turn onto serving dishes and decorate with a hot redcurrant sauce. Pass the remaining sauce separately.

Entertaining on a Grand Scale

Buffet Wedding — Breakfast for Fifty



Although many of the same considerations apply to a buffet wedding breakfast as a sit-down breakfast, there are various factors which go a long way towards simplifying arrangements. First, while a certain number of tables and chairs are helpful, they are not essential. Secondly, guests can actually help themselves to food and do not need to be served. The turkey and ham can be carved ahead of time, with thin slices arranged on platters decorated with radishes, tomatoes or shredded lettuce. Only the sweet potato and pineapple puffs are served hot, which means that no one is tied to the kitchen for very long.

Almost everything for this buffet can be prepared in advance and at any season of the year. If your local supermarket doesn't stock sweet potatoes or yams, most ethnic greengrocers do. Although strawberries may be hard to find in December, the same dessert can be made with other fruit, as recommended in the recipe. Trifle and syllabub are also popular substitutes. A 15 lb/7 kg turkey can be roasted early in the morning, or the night before the wedding so that it can cool before you carve it. Most butchers will boil a large ham for you, given a few days' notice. Early on the morning of the wedding you can glaze and bake it to slice and serve cold later in the day. Remove the rind and score the fat in a diamond pattern but do not cut through completely. Mix brown sugar and a small spoonful of dried mustard with orange juice, pineapple juice or cider to make a thick paste. Spread this over the ham and baste occasionally while it is baking. It should take approximately 1 hour to glaze a 5 lb/2½ kg ham. Alternatively, spread the ham with mustard then brush with maple syrup or a sugar and fruit juice paste or pat breadcrumbs all over the surface.

VEAL PÂTÉ

3 onions, finely chopped
3 oz/75 g vegetable fat or lard
3 tbsp/45 ml paprika
5 lb/2½ kg pie veal, diced and trimmed
1 tbsp/15 ml salt
6 tbsp/75 ml water
3 tbsp/45 ml tomato purée
18 egg yolks, beaten
12 oz/350 g butter, softened

As the quantities are large, it would be best to prepare the veal in two or even three pans if necessary.

Sauté the onions in melted vegetable fat or lard until golden. Stir in the paprika. Add the veal and toss to coat. Add the salt, water and tomato purée. Mix well. Cover the pan and simmer gently until the meat is tender. Stir occasionally and add a very little bit of water if necessary to prevent it sticking, but try to let the meat cook in its own juices.

When the meat has cooked and cooled, put it in the mincer or food processor until smooth. Do not strain off the gravy.

Beat the egg yolks with the butter until smooth. Add to the minced veal and mix well. Season to taste then pack into a terrine or loaf pan. Chill before serving. To make slicing easier, line the terrine with clingfilm or tin foil. Just before serving, turn the pâté onto a serving dish, peel off the film or foil and slice. Decorate with thinly sliced tomato and/or cucumber or surround with watercress or shredded lettuce.

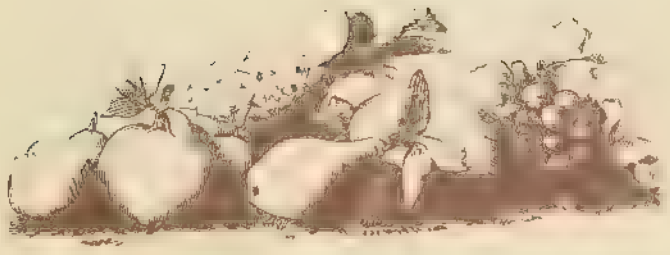
Sweet Potato and Pineapple Puffs

6 lb/3 kg sweet potatoes or yams
12 fl oz/350 ml milk, heated
1½ lb/675 g pineapple, diced or crushed
12 oz/350 g cornflakes, crushed

Boil the potatoes in their skins then cool slightly, peel and mash. Whisk with hot milk until light and fluffy. Fold in the well drained pineapple. Leave until cold.

Shape the potato mixture into tiny, bite-sized balls. Roll in crushed cornflakes and place on a greased ovenproof tray. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Bake for 5 minutes.

For variety, the sweet potatoes can be moulded around halved marshamallows. They can also be rolled in chopped nuts rather than cornflakes.



Stuffed Eggs, Peppers, Courgettes and Tomatoes

25 hardboiled eggs
2 oz/50 g tuna fish, flaked
4 anchovy fillets
8 black olives, stoned
1 oz/15 g capers

Peel the eggs, cut in half lengthways and remove the yolks. Mash the yolks, or put in the food processor, along with the tuna, anchovies, olives and capers. Blend to make a smooth paste, adding the oil from the tuna or anchovies, or a few spoonsful of olive oil, to get the correct consistency. Fill the egg whites, piling the stuffing high. Alternatively, pipe decorative swirls of filling into the egg whites with a piping bag. Garnish with strips of anchovy and/or olive.

10 red, yellow and/or green peppers
8 oz/225 g cream cheese
1 tsp/5 ml lemon juice
2 oz/50 g smoked salmon

Cut a slice off the top of the peppers and carefully remove all the seeds.

Beat the cream cheese with the lemon juice until light and smooth. Add the diced or minced salmon and blend thoroughly. Fill the peppers with cheese, packing it in gently. Chill for several hours then cut into thin slices and arrange overlapping slices on a serving dish.

25 courgettes
12 oz/350 g breadcrumbs
2 tsp/10 ml salt
4 oz/125 g fresh parsley or basil
6 cloves garlic, crushed
8 fl oz/225 ml olive oil

Wash the courgettes, cut in half and scrape out the seeds. Be sure to leave enough of the shell to retain its shape. Blanch in salted boiling water for 5 minutes. Drain well, refresh with cold water and drain again.

Combine the ingredients for the stuffing. Stir in just enough oil to moisten the mixture, but make sure it is still crumbly. Fill the courgette halves, arrange in a single layer in large baking pans and sprinkle with oil. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Bake the courgettes for 20 minutes. They should still be firm to the touch.

25 tomatoes
8 oz/225 g cottage cheese
4 oz/125 g sour cream
10 radishes, finely chopped
6 spring onions, finely chopped
4 oz/125 g cucumber, finely chopped

Cut the tomatoes in half crosswise, remove the seeds, sprinkle the shells with salt and turn upside down to drain on a paper towel for 30 minutes.

Combine the ingredients for the stuffing. Fill each tomato half and arrange on serving dishes.

Chicory and Orange Salad

20 oranges, thinly sliced
20 heads chicory, sliced
20 fl oz/600 ml oil
10 fl oz/300 ml orange juice
1 tsp/5 ml caster sugar
1 tsp/5 ml mustard powder
salt and pepper

Arrange the orange slices in two or more large, shallow dishes. Scatter the chicory on top.

Combine the dressing ingredients in a jar with a tight fitting lid and shake well. Pour over the salad and toss gently. Chill before serving.

STRAWBERRIES ROMANOFF

4 pints/2 litres double cream

8 oranges or lemons

16 egg whites

2 lb/1 kg sugar

8 lb/4 kg strawberries

2 lb/1 kg macaroons or ratafia biscuits

10 fl oz/300 ml Cointreau

Whisk the cream until it is just thick enough to hold its shape. Fold in the finely grated orange or lemon rind, reserving a few spoonsful to decorate the finished dessert.

Whisk the egg whites with the sugar until they are stiff but not dry. Fold into the cream, starting with just one spoonful to loosen the mixture then gradually adding the remainder.

Wash and hull the strawberries. Cut into quarters. Crush the macaroons or ratafias. Gently fold the fruit, biscuits and Cointreau into the cream. Save a few spoonsful of biscuit crumbs to decorate the finished dessert. Turn into serving dishes. Decorate with the reserved fruit rind and crumbs. Chill before serving.

Any soft fruit can be used instead of strawberries – try raspberries, blackberries or red or black currants. Crushed pineapple or peeled and diced peaches or apricots would also make a delicious alternative.

Timetable

1. Cook the veal for the pate. Cool then mix with the other ingredients and chill until 1 hour before serving. Note that while the pate needs what seems a huge quantity of egg yolks, all but two of the whites will be used for the Strawberries Romanoff. The remaining two could be used to make meringues to serve with the strawberries or whisked and folded into the sweet potatoes to lighten them and make them go further.

2. Roast the turkey and grave the ham. Leave both to cool thoroughly before slicing.

3. Cook the sweet potatoes, mash and mix with the remaining ingredients. Cool before shaping then cover until ready to bake.

4. Prepare the fillings for the eggs, peppers, courgettes and tomatoes.

5. Boil the eggs but do not shell.

6. Blanch the courgettes and cool. Stuff, bake and cool.

7. Stuff the peppers and chill. Slice 30 minutes before serving.

8. Prepare the strawberries and chill until 30 minutes before serving.

9. Prepare the chicory and orange salad. Dress, toss gently and chill.

10. Prepare the mixed salad and dressing but do not combine.

11. Drain the tomatoes then stuff. Shell the eggs and stuff.

12. Bake the sweet potato and pineapple puffs. (Note: these can be served cold if you prefer.)

13. Dress the green salad and toss gently.

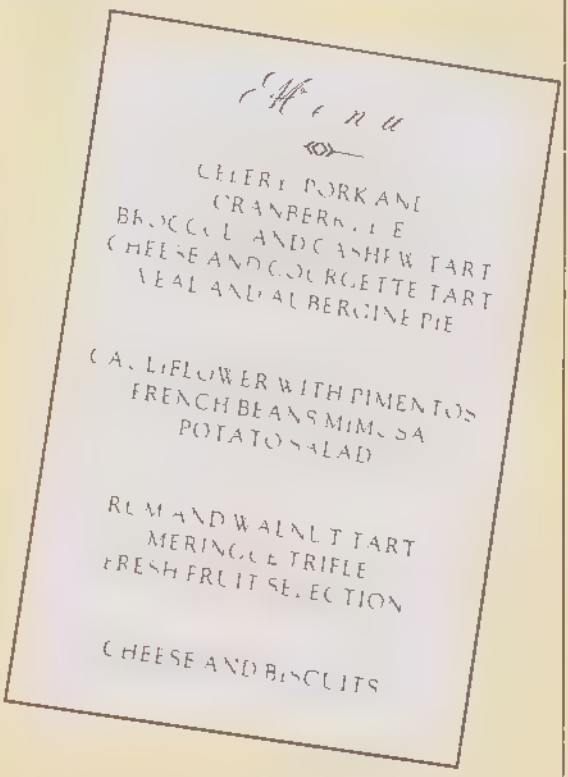
— Wine —

A mellow, smooth red wine would complement this special menu beautifully. Choose the best Bordeaux or Burgundy you can afford.

Entertaining on a Grand Scale

Surprise Party for Forty

Surprise parties are generally arranged to celebrate special occasions such as a birthday or anniversary. Guests are likely to include friends who haven't seen one another for quite a while and who may have travelled some distance in order to surprise the guest of honour. It is to be expected, therefore, that the party will go on for a long time and that everyone will have brought an appetite with them. Unlike weddings, where the bride and groom depart, automatically bringing the party to an end, a surprise party can last until the small hours with guests going back to the table to refill their plates time and again. Large quantities of filling dishes and a wide selection are the order of the day.



Pies are ideal for this kind of party. You can vary the fillings so that everyone finds something to their liking. A basic custard for quiches can be altered in countless ways by adding vegetables, herbs, cheese or cooked fish. Spread them over the base of cooked pastry shells and mix one large batch of custard to fill them all. The recipes chosen for this menu cover a wide range of ingredients and cooking methods. If you prefer a smaller selection, choose two only but make two of each. All of the pies should be cut into portion sizes before placing them on the table. The combination of chunky vegetable salads and pies will ensure that everyone has enough to eat, but several loaves of crusty bread should also be put in baskets as an accompaniment. Although everyone is bound to sample the tempting desserts, a cheese board accompanied by celery sticks and a bowl of fresh fruit will ensure that a snack later in the evening is available for those who want it. Several large chunks of English farmhouse cheese would be perfect with small bowls of pickle and chutney.

Celery, Pork and Cranberry Pie

Pastry
12 oz/350 g plain flour
2 eggs
7½ oz/210 g butter, diced
1 tbsp/15 ml sugar
3 fl oz/75 ml water
Filling
1½ lb/675 g cooked pork, diced
6 oz/175 g cranberry sauce
6 sticks celery, chopped
salt and pepper
1 egg, beaten
5 fl oz/150 ml consommé or jellied stock

Sieve the flour into a large mixing bowl and make a well in the centre. Break the egg into the well, add the butter, salt, sugar and water. Gradually draw the flour into the centre to form a dough. Mix well then knead until smooth. Wrap in clingfilm or tin foil and chill for 2 hours.

Cut the pastry into two pieces, one twice the size of the other. Roll the large piece to line the base and sides of a 9 inch (22 cm) springform or loose-bottomed cake tin. Fill with a layer of pork then top with cranberry sauce, celery and another layer of pork. Season with salt and pepper.

Roll out the remaining piece of pastry and place over the top of the pie, sealing the edges well with egg. Use any pastry trimmings to decorate the top of the pie and glaze with egg. Make a hole in the top so the steam can escape. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the pie for 35 minutes or until the pastry is crisp and golden brown.

Melt the consommé or stock over a low heat. Using a teaspoon or small funnel, pour the stock into the pie. Leave to cool completely before serving.

Broccoli and Cashew Tart

12 oz/350 g shortcrust or savoury pastry
3 oz/75 g margarine
3 oz/75 g flour
15 fl oz/300 ml milk
5 oz/150 g cheese, grated
salt and cayenne pepper
2 eggs, separated
1½ lb/675 g broccoli, cooked
3 oz/75 g cashew nuts, chopped

Roll out the pastry and line a 9½ inch (23 cm) diameter flan dish or an 8 × 11 inch (20 × 28 cm) loose-bottomed rectangular pan. Line the pastry with tin foil and either rice or baking beans. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6 and bake the pastry shell for 15 minutes or until it begins to brown and turn crisp. Remove the foil after 5 minutes. Leave the pastry shell to cool while you prepare the filling.

Use the margarine, flour and milk to prepare a white sauce (see page 150). Add the cheese and season to taste with salt and cayenne pepper. Stir over a low heat until smooth. The cheese can be Cheddar, Red Leicester, Emmental, Gruyère or anything else you have available. Mix in the egg yolks.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Carefully fold a spoonful into the sauce to loosen it then gradually add the remainder.

Chop the broccoli and spread over the base of the pastry. Cover with chopped nuts then top with sauce. Sprinkle lightly with cayenne pepper. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Bake the pie for 20 minutes or until the filling has puffed up and browned. Leave to rest for 5 minutes before slicing or cool completely and serve cold.

Cheese and Courgette Tart

12 oz/350 g shortcrust or savoury pastry
1½ lb/675 g courgettes, thinly sliced
5 oz/150 g butter
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 lemon
salt and pepper
5 tbsp/75 ml flour
8 fl oz/225 ml milk
8 oz/225 g cheese, grated
2 eggs, separated
8 fl oz/225 ml sour cream

Roll out the pastry and line a 9½ inch (23 cm) round flan dish or an 8 × 11 inch (20 × 28 cm) loose-bottomed rectangular pan. Line the pastry with tin foil and either rice or baking beans. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6 and bake the pastry shell for 15 minutes or until it begins to brown and turn crisp. Remove the foil after 5 minutes. Leave the pastry shell to cool while you prepare the filling.

Sauté the courgettes in half of the butter for 3–4 minutes. Add the garlic and the juice and finely grated rind of the lemon. Continue cooking over a medium heat until the courgettes are soft. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Remove the courgettes and set aside.

Add the remaining butter to the juices left in the pan from the courgettes. Stir in the flour. Slowly add the milk and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens. Add the cheese and stir until the sauce is smooth. The cheese can be Cheddar, Red Leicester, Emmental, Gruyère or anything else you have available.

Remove from the heat and mix in the egg yolks and sour cream.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Carefully fold a spoonful into the sauce to loosen it then gradually add the remainder. Pour the sauce into the baked pastry case. Arrange the courgette slices over the top. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the pie for 15 minutes. Leave the pie to rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

VEAL AND AUBERGINE PIE

1 large aubergine
2 medium onions, finely chopped
1 large green pepper, finely chopped
2 tbsp/30 ml vegetable or olive oil
2 lb/900 g stewing veal
4 tomatoes, skinned and chopped
1 tbsp/15 ml tomato purée
juice of ½ lemon
½ tsp/2½ ml ground cumin
salt and pepper
6 fl oz/175 ml red wine
1 lb/450 g tin chick peas
8 oz/225 g shortcrust pastry
8 oz/225 g puff or flaky pastry
1 egg, beaten

Cut the aubergine in half lengthways and then in half again. Cut into slices approximately ½ inch (1½ cm) thick. Sprinkle with salt and leave in a colander to drain.

Soften the onions and pepper in hot oil. Add the cubed meat and stir until sealed. Mix in the tomatoes, tomato purée, lemon juice and cumin. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Pat the aubergine dry with paper towels and add to the pan. Stir in the wine, cover and simmer gently for 2½ hours or until the meat is tender. Mix in the chick peas, remove the lid and cook for a further 15 minutes or until the gravy has reduced and thickened. Cool slightly.

Roll out the shortcrust pastry and line a 9½ inch (23 cm) springform or loose-bottomed cake tin. Fill with veal and aubergine. Roll out the puff or flaky pastry and place on top of the pie dish, sealing the edges well. Use any trimmings to decorate the top crust. Brush with egg and make a slit in the top to let the steam escape. Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6. Bake the pie for 35 minutes or until the pastry is well risen and golden brown. Serve hot.

CAULIFLOWER WITH PIMENTOS

2 large cauliflowers

1 lb/450 g black olives, stoned

4 pimentos, chopped

10 fl oz/300 ml vegetable or olive oil

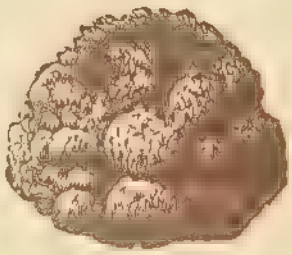
3 fl oz/75 ml white wine vinegar

1 clove garlic, crushed

salt and pepper

Wash the cauliflower, trim and separate the florets. Cook in boiling salted water until just tender, approximately 10 minutes. The cauliflower should be slightly crunchy. Drain, rinse in cold water and drain again. Toss with the sliced olives and pimentos.

Combine the ingredients for the dressing in a jar with a tight fitting lid. Shake well. Pour over the salad while the cauliflower is still warm and mix gently to coat. Cool thoroughly and chill before serving.



FRENCH BEANS MIMOSA

3 lb/1½ kg French beans
1 medium onion, finely chopped
2 small cloves garlic, finely chopped
4 oz/125 g Parmesan cheese
8 fl oz/225 ml olive oil
6 tbsp/90 ml white wine vinegar
salt and pepper

Trim the beans and cook in boiling salted water for 5 minutes or until just tender. They should still be slightly crunchy. Drain, rinse in cold water and drain again. Place in a large, shallow dish. Scatter the onion and garlic over the top. Sprinkle with cheese.

Whisk the oil and vinegar together until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Pour over the salad while the beans are still warm and mix gently to coat. Cool thoroughly and chill before serving.

POTATO SALAD

5 lb/2½ kg new potatoes
1 fl oz/25 ml lemon juice
salt and pepper
6 hardboiled eggs, chopped
1 Spanish onion, finely chopped
1 green pepper, finely chopped
4 carrots, peeled and grated
6 oz/175 g mayonnaise

Cook the potatoes in their skins until just tender. Cool slightly and dice or slice. Sprinkle with lemon juice, salt and pepper. Add the eggs, vegetables and mayonnaise. Mix well. Cool thoroughly and chill before serving.

RUM AND WALNUT TART

1 lb/450 g sweet shortcrust pastry
4 tbsp/60 ml apricot jam
Filling
12 oz/350 g walnuts, chopped
4 fl oz/125 ml rum
4 tbsp/60 ml double cream
2 tsp/10 ml vanilla
6 eggs, separated
12 oz/350 g sugar
Topping
4 eggs, separated
6 oz/175 g sugar
4 fl oz/125 ml brandy
2 envelopes unflavoured gelatine
30 fl oz/900 ml whipping cream
4 oz/125 g walnut halves

Roll out the pastry and line two 8 inch (20 cm) flan dishes or sandwich pans. Spread jam over the base.

Combine the walnuts, rum, cream and vanilla in a food processor or liquidiser until smooth.

Whisk the egg yolks and sugar together until very thick and nearly white. Fold into the walnut mixture.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Gently fold one spoonful into the walnut mixture to loosen it then gradually add the remainder. Turn into the pastry case. Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Bake the tarts for 30 minutes or until firm to the touch. Remove from the oven and leave to cool.

While the tarts are cooling, prepare the topping. Whisk the egg yolks with sugar until very thick and nearly white. Warm the brandy, sprinkle the gelatine over it and stir until it has dissolved. Fold into the egg yolks.

Whisk the cream until it is just thick enough to hold its shape. Fold into the egg yolks.

Whisk the egg whites until they are stiff but not dry. Gently fold one spoonful into the egg yolk mixture to loosen it then gradually add the remainder.

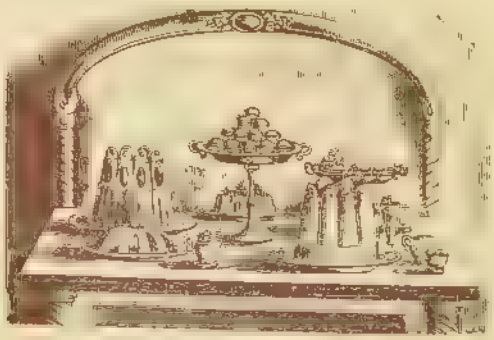
Tie a paper collar, approximately 4 inches (10 cm) high around the outside of the cooled tarts. Carefully pour on the topping. Chill overnight before serving. When the topping is just beginning to set, decorate with walnut halves.

MERINGUE TRIFLE

36 sponge fingers
4 fl oz/125 ml orange juice or Cointreau
1 lb/450 g fruit
2 pints/1 litre custard
6 egg whites
2 tbsp/30 ml sugar

Place a layer of sponge fingers in the bottom of two ovenproof serving dishes. Sprinkle with orange juice or Cointreau. Top with any fresh or tinned fruit you like—orange slices, berries, peaches or poached plums are all delicious. Cover with warm custard. Leave until the custard has cooled completely and set firmly.

Whisk the egg whites with sugar until they are stiff but not dry. Spoon over the custard, sealing the edges of the dish well. Preheat the oven to 220C/425F/Gas 7. Bake the trifle for 5 minutes or until the meringue is just beginning to turn golden brown. Cool and chill before serving.



— Timetable —

1. Prepare the rum and walnut tart and chill until 30 minutes before serving.

2. Cook the pork and veal for the pies.

3 Prepare the pastries Chill the pastry for the pork and veal pies Bake the shells for the broccoli and courgette tarts.

4. Make the custard for the meringue trifle Prepare the sponge fingers and fruit then pour the custard on top. Leave to cool.

5. Scrub and boil the potatoes.

6 Prepare the vegetables for the salads Dress, cool and chill until 1 hour before serving.

7. Assemble and bake the pork and veal pies. Leave to cool.

8. Prepare the fillings for the broccoli and courgette tarts. Do not add the egg whites

9. Whisk the egg whites for the meringue trifle Bake, cool and chill.

10. Whisk the egg whites for the broccoli and courgette tarts. Fold into the sauces, assemble and bake the tarts.

11. Set out the fruit bowl, cheese and biscuits.

— Wine

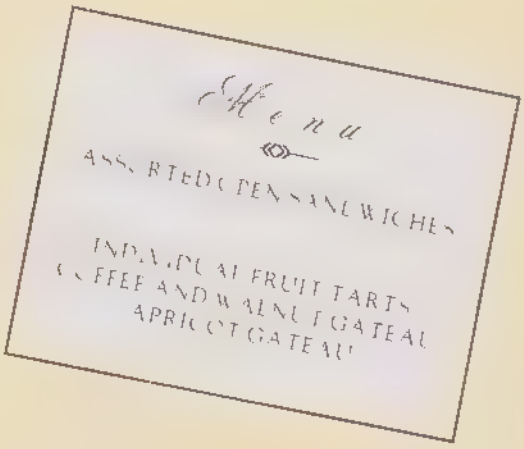
Choose a red wine that is drinkable with or without food for what will probably be a long, leisurely evening. Rioja or Dao from Portugal are good choices, as are Barolo or Côtes du Rhône. For those who prefer white wine, offer Bernkasteler or a medium hock. Le Piat D'Or, red or white, would also be suitable.

Entertaining on a Grand Scale

Tea Party for Forty

If you are the least bit artistic, tea parties with their dainty bite-sized sandwiches provide an opportunity to get carried away with decoration, making each little masterpiece as beautiful as possible. It is small scale entertaining in that the food is miniature no matter how large the group. Now is the time to carve vegetables into flower patterns, to peel and spiral, to make patterns with the various nozzles on a piping bag, to garnish to your heart's content. But it is important not to get so carried away with different ideas that the whole intricate design turns into a muddle. One or two ideas or themes can be carried through the entire presentation. On the other hand, if you are not artistic, the contrast of colours and shapes alone will be enough for an attractive and tempting display. Small sandwiches, open or closed, fruit tarts and gateaux make the perfect choice for a party no matter what your abilities. Anyone can present them well but the more skilful you are the more tantalising the results will be.

There are two ways of serving tea. You can either let your guests help themselves from a table groaning with goodies or pass among them circulating trays of food. Either way, have small plates and plenty of napkins to hand. The tarts and gateaux will also require forks. Unless



you are holding open house, with people constantly coming and going, it is unlikely that they will all be able to sit down. This means that they will be juggling food and drink while chatting, always a difficult operation. Cups and plates once put down tend to be forgotten and replacements are frequently necessary. Be certain to allow for this.

Assorted Open Sandwiches

Buy or bake as many types of bread as possible – white, wholewheat, granary, rye, black bread, fruit bread etc. Slice very thinly, removing the crust where necessary and cut into a variety of shapes – triangles, fingers or squares. Biscuit cutters can be used to make rounds or squares. Soft fillings based on butter, cheese or pâté can be piped into decorative patterns around the edges of the bread. Use raw vegetables, tiny pickled onions or gherkins to garnish. For slippery fillings, spread the bread with butter (plain or flavoured) or creamed cheese first to anchor the topping.

The important thing to remember is that the sandwiches should not be too messy. Do not overload them or use a topping that is moist and likely to dribble all over your guests' best clothes! Similarly, if people are chatting merrily they will not want to wrestle with large portions – each sandwich should be small enough to be consumed in no more than two or three bites.

Recommended Spreads

Butter mixed with minced prawns, flaked, cooked fish (fresh or smoked), minced chicken, ham, tongue, beef or turkey. Flavour with mustard, lemon or lime juice, horseradish, curry powder or hot pepper sauce.

Cream cheese and/or cottage cheese mixed with almost anything, but especially good with minced olives, smoked salmon, dates and walnuts, dried apricots, diced or puréed peaches, apricots or pineapple or even chunky preserves.

Scrambled eggs cooked with mushrooms, onions, peppers, tomatoes, cheese or herbs.

Pâté of any sort.

Ham, salami, smoked meat or sausage of any sort. Particularly good when mixed with a piece of cheese, fruit or pickle for a contrast in flavour and texture.

Chopped eggs, flaked tuna or salmon, minced chicken, ham or turkey bound with mayonnaise or sour cream and flavoured with crispy bacon, onions, tomato sauce, mustard or curry powder. Top with just the tiniest drop of caviar or lumpfish, a less expensive but equally luxurious alternative.

Grated cheese of any sort mixed to a spreading consistency with milk, softened butter or cream cheese and flavoured with Croft sherry or port or brandy, chopped vegetables, hot peppers, gherkins, pickled onions, herbs or chopped or ground nuts. The sky is the limit here – just be sure to try exotic combinations on your family before offering them to guests!

Individual Fruit Tarts

3 lb/1½ kg sweet shortcrust pastry
2 lb/1 kg fruit
Custard Filling
8 oz/225 g sugar
2 oz/50 g cornflour
3 oz/75 g plain flour
4 whole eggs, beaten
4 egg yolks, beaten
2 pints/1 litre milk
Glaze
6 oz/175 g apricot jam or redcurrant jelly
4 tsp/20 ml lemon juice
4 tbsp/60 ml water

Roll out the pastry and line individual pie dishes or bun tins. If you bind the pastry with egg yolks rather than water it will be less likely to shrink while baking but must be watched to ensure that it doesn't brown too quickly.

Preheat the oven to 190C/375F/Gas 5. Bake the pastry shells for 10 minutes or until crisp and golden. Set aside to cool.

Combine the sugar, cornflour and flour for the custard. Mix in the eggs and yolks. Add enough milk to make a smooth paste. Heat the remaining milk until it is just about to boil. Slowly stir into the paste. Return to the pan and heat, stirring constantly, until the custard thickens. Cover with greaseproof paper to prevent a skin forming and leave to cool.

Place a spoonful of cold custard in each pastry case and top with fruit. You can use any kind of berry, cherries, peaches, apricots or pineapple. If the fruit is tinned or frozen, be sure to drain it thoroughly.

Melt the jam or jelly with lemon juice and water, stirring constantly. Simmer for 5 minutes or until thick and smooth. Brush the glaze over the fruit and leave to set. Do not keep the tarts overnight as the pastry will get soft.

Cream cheese, Quark or mascarpone can be whisked with sugar and substituted for custard if you prefer. Top with fruit and glaze as above.

Coffee and Walnut Gateau

2½ oz/65 g margarine
6 oz/175 g sugar
2 eggs
½ tsp/2½ ml coffee essence (Camp)
7 oz/200 g plain flour
2 tsp/10 ml baking powder
½ tsp/2½ ml salt
2 fl oz/50 ml milk
2 fl oz/50 ml Baileys Irish Cream
4 oz/125 g walnuts, chopped
Icing
4 oz/125 g unsalted butter
8 oz/225 g icing sugar, sieved
4 tbsp/60 ml Baileys Irish Cream
1 tsp/5 ml coffee essence (Camp)
3 tbsp/45 ml milk
4 oz/125 g walnuts

Cream the margarine and sugar for the cake until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each. Stir in the coffee essence.

Sieve together the flour, baking powder and salt. Add to the egg mixture, alternating with the milk and Baileys, until well blended. Fold in the walnuts. Grease two 8 inch (20 cm) diameter sandwich pans and line the bottoms with greaseproof paper. Turn the batter into the pans. Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the cakes for 35–40 minutes or until well risen and springy to the touch. Turn onto wire trays to cool and remove the lining paper. Cool completely.

Cream the butter for the icing and add the sugar. Mix well. Stir in the Baileys and coffee essence. Add just enough milk to make the icing smooth and of a spreading consistency.

Spread one-third of the icing over one layer of cake. Place the other layer on top. Spread the remaining icing over the outside edges and top layer of cake. Decorate with walnuts.

APRICOT GATEAU

8 oz/225 g plain flour
1½ tsp/7½ ml baking powder
1 tbsp/15 ml unsweetened cocoa
3 oz/75 g butter
6 oz/175 g caster sugar
3 eggs, separated
5 fl oz/150 ml milk
3 tbsp/45 ml Baileys Irish Cream
10 fl oz/300 ml double cream
Decoration
6 tbsp/90 ml apricot jam, sieved
15 oz/425 g tin apricot halves, drained
Baileys Chocolate Icing (see page 74)

Sift the flour, baking powder and cocoa together. Beat the butter with the sugar until pale and creamy. Add the egg yolks and mix well. Stir the dry ingredients into the egg mixture. Add the milk gradually to keep the consistency soft. Stir in Baileys Irish Cream.

Whisk the egg whites until stiff but not dry. Fold one spoonful into the batter to loosen it then gradually fold in the remainder. Divide between two base-lined and greased 8 inch (20 cm) diameter sandwich tins.

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4. Bake the cakes for 35–40 minutes or until well risen and springy to the touch. Turn onto wire trays to cool and remove the lining paper. When the cakes are cold, cut each one in half horizontally.

Whip the cream until it stands in soft peaks. Spread three layers with jam and two-thirds of the cream. Trim eight pieces of apricot for decoration. Chop the remainder and arrange on the three cake layers. Place the layers one on top of the other. Finish with the plain layer. Spread with Baileys Chocolate Icing and pipe swirls of cream around the edge. Decorate with apricot pieces. Keep in a cool place until ready to serve.

Pitted cherries or mandarin oranges can be used instead of apricots. The gateau can also be decorated with chocolate leaves made by dipping leaves or rose petals into melted chocolate. Leave until the chocolate has set then carefully peel off the leaves.

Timetable

1. Bake the cakes for the gateaux and leave to cool.

2. Prepare the pastry for the fruit tarts. Roll out and bake. Leave to cool.

3. Prepare the custard for the tarts. Leave to cool.

4. Make the icing for the Coffee and Walnut Gateau. Fill and ice the cake.

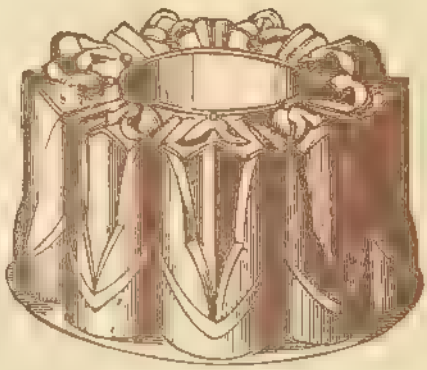
5. Whisk the cream for the Apricot Gateau. Assemble. Make the icing and decorate the cake. Leave in a cool place until ready to serve.

6. Prepare the toppings for the sandwiches. Make the sandwiches and cover with clingfilm until ready to serve.

7. Prepare the fruit for the tarts. Assemble the tarts and glaze.

Wine

One of the rare occasions for which wine is not actually appropriate. Offer, instead, a selection of teas with a choice of milk or lemon in your prettiest china cups.



Safety Precautions

Despite wholehearted recommendations that fresh ingredients should be used whenever possible, they can often be complemented by frozen, bottled or tinned foods. Entertaining on short notice is much simpler if you can rely on a well-stocked larder or freezer. Convenience foods are not entirely poisonous—they do have their place in our lives. Delicatessen shelves sag under the weight of sauces, spices and imported goods which, in small quantity and on rare occasions, can help produce masterpieces on the spur of the moment. When you see something in a shop that looks interesting, buy it. You may not know at the time what you will do with it, but you never know when something unusual will come in handy.

Freezers, of course, help to defy the seasons. Although fruit, particularly, may soften when defrosted and not be quite the same as it was in its original state, it can certainly be used in different forms for sauces, ice creams or mousses for example. Vegetables can be added to casseroles or soups. And we all know the advantages of batch cooking. When you bake a cake or casserole, make a little bit extra for the freezer and the unexpected guest. It can always be decorated or dressed up when needed.

Here, then, is a list of things that can be used creatively. You do not need them all. Do not rush out to the shop buying everything on the list. But keep some of them to hand and you will never be at a loss.

High priority should go to an assortment of pulses, beans and lentils. They can be dried or tinned. If dried, they will need to be soaked and cooked before using. If tinned, simply rinse, drain and use. There is no end of things you can do with them—soups, salads, purées for dipping with pitta and raw vegetables, chilli or curry can all be based on pulses, particularly combined with cooked meat or vegetables, herbs, spices and tomatoes.

Herbs and spices – buy in small quantities if dried as their flavour disappears when kept for any length of time. Fresh herbs can be finely chopped and frozen then used a spoonful at a time. Garlic powder or purée are particularly important.

Tomatoes—whole, chopped or as sauce or purée. An entire book can be devoted to the uses of tomatoes. They go well with practically everything and you should never let yourself run out.

Anchovies—fillets or paste.

Olives.

Tuna fish, crabmeat, salmon, sardines.

There is no end of ways these can be used from salads to soufflés, soups, pies or fishcakes. Try mixing flaked fish with a white sauce, flavour to taste with herbs, tomatoes or vegetables and serve over toast, rice or as a filling for pancakes. Smoked cod's roe can be turned into a quick Taramasalata. Smoked oysters or mussels can be added to a pie or salad in tiny quantities but with enormous effect.

Condensed soups that can be mixed with milk, water or sherry to make a sauce.

Vegetables – peas, sweetcorn, pimentos. Water chestnuts and bamboo shoots can create a Chinese stir-fry, soup or omelette in a matter of minutes. Avoid French beans and carrots or others that are softer than they should be—these are best fresh or frozen.

Pickles, chutneys and sauces, both sweet and savoury, to use either as accompaniments or mixed with pasta to make a meal in themselves.

Ready-made sauces and spreads that can be used for canapés, omelettes, dips or filling raw vegetables such as celery sticks or cucumber boats.

Soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, Tabasco or any other hot pepper sauce, tomato ketchup and mayonnaise are invaluable both as seasonings and for making sauces. There are dozens of mustards available these days all of which can be used for spreads, sauces or dipping.

Assorted oils and vinegars. Basic salad dressings can be made with vegetable or corn oil, but the addition of olive, walnut or hazelnut oil gives a unique taste. Wine vinegar, cider vinegar and flavoured herb or fruit vinegars can also be used for a change of pace.

Rice – brown and white. Bulghur wheat, available from most health food shops, is also delicious either mixed with the rice or used in a salad or stuffing. Pearl barley makes a superb risotto.

Pasta of any shape or size can be a lifesaver. Most supermarkets now stock a range of stuffed pasta which can be frozen successfully. Serve with your favourite sauce or just toss with butter and cheese. Dried noodles, spaghetti and macaroni can be cooked and served hot or cold, with whatever accompaniments you can lay your hands on. Sauces can be made from virtually anything. Chinese noodles can be mixed with cooked meat, fish or vegetables for a quick meal. Try adding small pasta to soup or frying leftover spaghetti with eggs and vegetables to make an omelette.

Assorted flours such as cornmeal, plain and strong white, wholemeal and granary to make spur of the moment crêpes or pancakes, rolls, pizza or pastry. Small quantities of oatmeal can also be mixed in for a nutty flavour.

Dried yeast, preferably Fermipan which does not need to be reconstituted. Rolls, muffins and pizza bases can rise in less than an hour to provide a hearty meal or snack on short notice.

Dried fruit for desserts, cakes and biscuits, stuffings, salads or sauces. Keep a selection of raisins, sultanas, glacé cherries, crystallised fruit, mixed peel, stem ginger, apricots, dates, figs etc. Prunes and apricots are delicious added to stews for extra interest.

Bottled or tinned fruit to serve on its own, with sweet or savoury dishes, hot or cold, whole or puréed to make a sauce. The juice can be strained off and mixed with cornflour or arrowroot dissolved in water then heated until thick.

Chocolate bars or pieces or unsweetened cocoa for garnishes, baking or sauces.

Whole, flaked or chopped nuts – almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts and/or brazil nuts. Use for both sweet and savoury dishes, as they are or tossed in melted butter and sugar or spices for a nibble to serve with drinks. If you cook the nuts with melted sugar and a few drops of water until caramelised, they will harden as they cool to make praline. Break up and store in an airtight jar for serving as a sweet or with ice cream or to decorate cake.

Tinned chestnut purée can be sweetened to make a superb sauce, ice cream or mousse.

Desiccated coconut can be used for a garnish or liquidised with boiling water to make coconut milk, an excellent flavouring for rice and bean dishes or curries.

Jam and marmalade, honey, syrup, redcurrant jelly, cranberry sauce can be used for sauces, spreads, ice cream toppings, cake fillings or to baste chops or roasts.

Keep a packet of flaky or puff pastry in the freezer. Grated cheese also freezes well and you never know when you might need it quickly. Packets of Parmesan cheese do not have the same flavour as fresh cheese, but can be handy all the same.

Basic Recipes

WHITE SAUCE

¾ oz/20 g butter or margarine
2 tbsp/30 ml plain flour
10 fl oz/300 ml milk
salt and pepper

Melt the butter or margarine. Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 3 minutes. Slowly add the milk and continue stirring until the sauce boils and thickens. Simmer gently for 3 minutes longer. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

These proportions make a sauce of pouring consistency. Adjust the quantities as follows for a thinner or thicker sauce:

to make a thin sauce for soups, use only ½ oz/15 g each butter or margarine and flour;

to make a coating sauce, use 1 oz/25 g each butter or margarine and flour;

to make a thick sauce for binding croquettes or as a base for soufflés, use 2 oz/50 g each butter or margarine and flour.

Variations

Substitute stock (vegetable, fish, ham, chicken or beef), white wine, or single cream for all or half of the milk. Cider, Guinness and brown ale can also be used.

Flavour the sauce with herbs, mustard, tomato paste, anchovy paste, paprika or cayenne powder to taste.

To make a brown sauce, cook the flour and fat until very brown. Dripping or meat fat can be used instead of butter or margarine. Chopped bacon, mushroom stalks, a carrot and onion can be browned in the fat before the liquid is added. Use meat stock rather than milk. Strain the sauce after it has cooked and season with Worcestershire sauce, tomato purée, Marsala, Madeira or Croft sherry. Serve with pork, lamb, beef or game. To serve with duck, flavour the sauce with Croft port, lemon juice, orange juice and sugar to taste.

To make a bechamel sauce, infuse an onion, bay leaf and 3 peppercorns in the hot milk for 15 minutes. Strain and use. A blade of mace can also be added.

Cheese sauce: add 3 oz/75 g grated cheese + ½ tsp/2½ ml mustard powder. Serve with eggs, vegetables, fish, poultry or pasta.

Onion sauce: simmer 2 onions in boiling salted water until tender; mix the water with milk for the sauce, add the chopped onions and season with paprika. Serve with lamb or eggs.

Mushroom sauce: brown the flour and use beef stock for the liquid; add 4 oz/125 g cooked mushrooms and season with tomato purée and Worcestershire sauce (optional). Serve with fish, meat or poultry.

Egg sauce: add 1 chopped hardboiled egg + 2 tsp/10 ml chopped chives or parsley. Serve with fish, boiled ham or vegetables.

Butter sauce: add 3 oz/75 g butter cubes + 1 beaten egg yolk. Serve with poultry, fish or vegetables.

FLAVOURED BUTTER

Use flavoured butter to spread on biscuits, fresh bread or croûtons as a basis for sandwiches and canapés. Soften 4 oz/125 g butter, add any one of the following, mix thoroughly and spread or pipe as needed.

2 crushed cloves garlic + 1 tsp/5 ml chopped parsley or basil + ½ tsp/2½ ml lemon juice;

6 mashed anchovies;

4 oz/125 g crumbled or mashed cheese + ½ tsp/2½ ml mustard (do not add the mustard if using blue cheese);

2 tsp/10 ml curry powder;

1 red pepper grilled until the skin is black then peeled and puréed;

1 tbsp/15 ml tomato purée;

2 oz/50 g cooked trout, prawns or smoked salmon with a squeeze of lemon juice and plenty of black pepper;

mashed yolks of 2 hardboiled eggs plus 1 tbsp/15 ml capers or finely chopped pickled gherkins;

pinch saffron dissolved in boiling water;

1 tbsp/15 ml mustard.

Choux Pastry

2 oz/50 g butter or margarine
5 fl oz/150 ml water
3 oz/75 g plain flour
2 eggs, beaten

Melt the butter or margarine in the water. Bring to the boil, remove from the heat and stir in all of the flour at once. Beat just until it forms a ball that leaves the sides of the pan clean. Do not overbeat or the fat will leak out. Beat in the eggs a little bit at a time. The pastry should be shiny and stiff enough to hold its shape. You can do this with an electric mixer or food processor.

Variations

Place small spoonsful of pastry on greased trays and bake for 15 minutes or until light and golden at 200C/400F/Gas 6. Make a slit in each to let the steam escape. Place a spoonful of sweet or savoury filling in each bun. Serve hot or cold.

Pipe the pastry onto greased trays in long fingers to make eclairs. Bake as above, make a slit in each to let the steam escape and cool thoroughly. Fill with custard (see page 141) or whipped cream (plain or flavoured with coffee or chocolate) and glaze with icing sugar mixed to a coating consistency with 1 tbsp/15 ml Baileys Irish Cream and 1 tbsp/15 ml cocoa or coffee essence.

To make a gougère, spoon the pastry into a ring shape on a greased tray. Place a second layer on top, arranging the scoops in the gaps between those on the bottom layer. Brush carefully with beaten egg and bake for 35–40 minutes at 190C/375F/Gas 5 or until golden and firm to the touch. Pierce in three or four places with a skewer to let the steam escape. Rest for 10 minutes. Transfer to a serving dish and fill the inside of the ring with cooked poultry, ham, vegetables or eggs in a savoury sauce. Cubes of cheese can be mixed into the pastry or grated cheese sprinkled on top before it goes into the oven. Serve hot.

Add grated cheese, sautéed onions and/or mushrooms and diced ham to the pastry before baking it. A combination of cheese, sweetcorn and either cayenne pepper, curry powder or chilli powder could also be used. The pastries could be deep fried rather than baked if you prefer. Drop 3 or 4 spoonsful at a time into smoking hot fat and cook until they have puffed up and browned. Drain well and serve quickly.

SHORTCRUST PASTRY

2 oz/50 g margarine

2 oz/50 g lard or vegetable fat

8 oz/225 g plain flour

pinch salt

3 tbsp/75 ml water

Dice the margarine and lard or fat. Rub into the combined flour and salt until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs. Bind with water to make a smooth dough.

Variations

Bind the dough with a beaten egg instead of water.

Use all butter or soft margarine for the fat.

Use half white and half wholewheat flour.

Add caster or icing sugar to the flour for a sweet pastry or a pinch of mustard powder or cayenne pepper plus a spoonful of grated Parmesan or Cheddar cheese for a savoury pastry.

VINAIGRETTE DRESSING

2 tbsp/30 ml lemon juice or vinegar
4 tbsp/60 ml oil
salt and pepper
pinch sugar (optional)
pinch dry mustard OR
1 tsp/5 ml dried herbs

Combine all the ingredients in a jar with a tight fitting lid and shake well. If you are not using the dressing immediately, store in the refrigerator and shake vigorously before pouring over the salad.

Variations

Substitute orange juice for lemon juice or vinegar. The vinegar can be red or white wine vinegar, cider vinegar, raspberry vinegar, tarragon vinegar or anything else that strikes your fancy.

The oil can be all vegetable or vegetable mixed with a small amount of olive, hazelnut or walnut oil.

If you use fresh herbs, double the quantity.

A crushed clove of garlic or 1 tsp/5 ml Parmesan cheese can be added.

2 oz/50 g mashed blue cheese can be whisked into the dressing.

MARINADES

Marinades tenderise and impart additional flavour to game, meat and poultry. They can be poured over the food to be cooked for as little as 2 hours or as long as 24 hours. Be sure to stir or turn occasionally. The meat can then be drained and either grilled or barbecued or slowly cooked in a casserole. Any liquid remaining can be added to the sauce if you are making a casserole.

Liquidise 2 onions with olive oil, lemon juice, 1 bay leaf and a pinch of oregano. Use for lamb.

Mix natural yoghurt with herbs and use for chicken, beef or lamb.

Marinate beef or game in red wine or vinegar, either separately or mixed together plus a chopped carrot, celery stick and herbs to taste.

Poultry should be marinated in white wine and lemon juice or white wine vinegar plus herbs to taste. A small spoonful of honey can be dissolved in the liquid.

Steak can be marinated in a mixture of soy sauce, salad oil, crushed garlic and ginger root.

BREAD DOUGH

1 oz/25 g dried yeast
1½ lb/675 g strong flour
1 tsp/5 ml salt
1 tsp/5 ml sugar
½ oz/15 g butter or lard (optional)
15 fl oz/450 ml warm water or milk

Combine the yeast, flour, salt and sugar. Be sure that you are using Fermipan yeast that should be mixed directly into dry ingredients, otherwise check instructions on the packet for reconstituting the yeast. Rub in the butter or lard if you are using it. Mix to a smooth dough with the water or milk and knead until smooth and elastic. Place the dough in a greased bowl, cover and put in the airing cupboard until it has doubled in bulk. This will take approximately 1 hour. You will know the dough is ready if it springs back when you gently press it with your finger.

Punch the dough down, knead until smooth and shape as required. Place on greased baking sheets, cover and rise again for 15 minutes if you are making rolls. If you are making a loaf of bread, put the dough into the pan and leave until it has doubled in bulk again.

Bake rolls for 15–20 minutes, loaves for 30–40 minutes at 200C/400F/Gas 6.

Variations

To make pizza, use olive oil instead of butter or lard. After the first rising, roll the dough into circles or rectangles and prove for just 10 minutes. Spread with tomato sauce, grated cheese and whatever toppings you have chosen. Bake for 10 minutes at 220C/450F/Gas 8 or until the base is crisp and the cheese melted.

Use a combination of white and wholemeal, granary or rye flour.

Brush the rolls or loaves with beaten egg and sprinkle with caraway, sesame or poppy seeds.

Brush the baked loaf with salt water and sprinkle with wheat.

Knead a few chopped onions, a pinch of dried mustard and some grated cheese into the dough. Shape into fingers and glaze with beaten egg before baking.

Shape the dough into ovals, rounds or plaits. Bake in a loaf pan, casserole or unused flower pot. The depth of the rolls or loaves will alter the baking time, so keep a careful watch on the oven. You will know the bread is done if it sounds hollow when the bottom is tapped.

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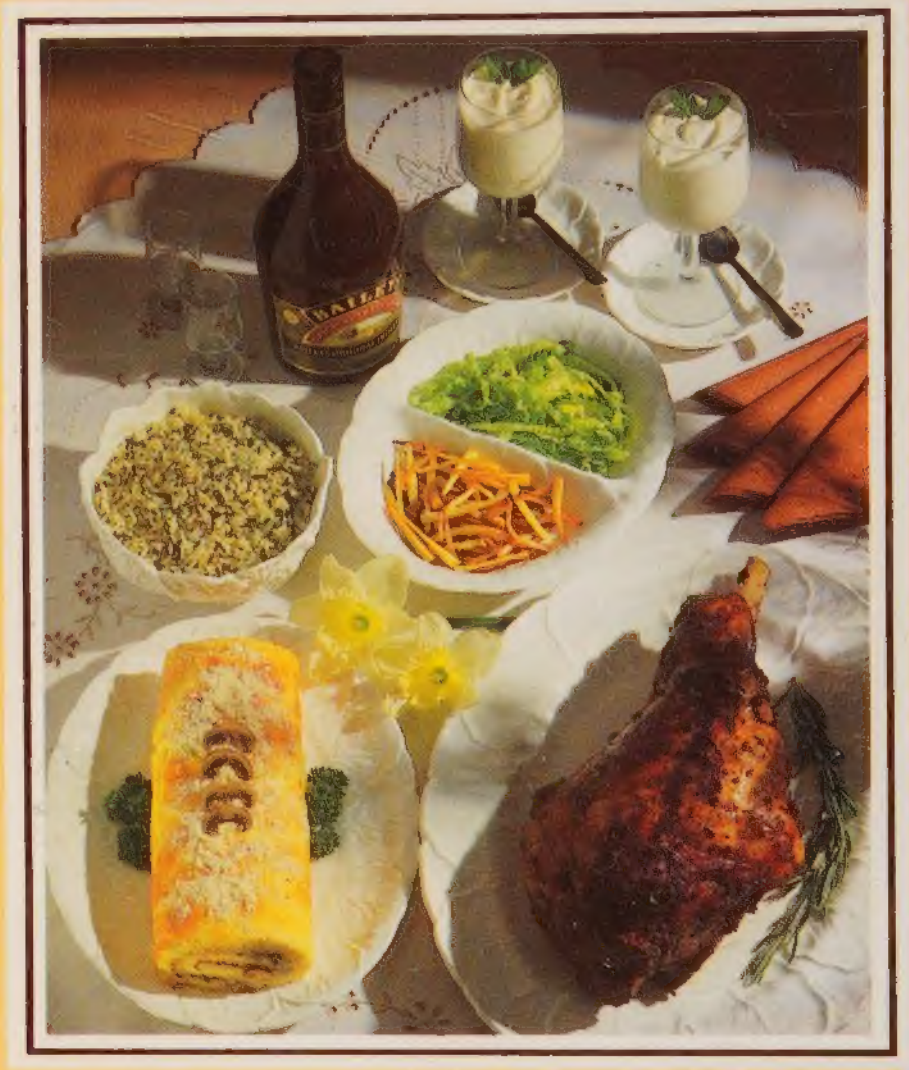

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